Milton's Poetic Technique:
Sound and Sight Imagery and the Theme of Temptation in the Major Poems

by

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Milton viewed life as a series of trials and opportunities for the proving of the spirit. Temptation is thus a central theme in his major poems: Comus, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes. This essay attempts to examine the poetic methods used to both depict character and portray temptation in these poems. It is asserted that Milton establishes a characteristic system of sound and sight images to perform these vital functions.
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout Milton's poetry and prose certain basic ideas about the human condition are reiterated. Chief among these -- and the very basis of Paradise Lost's avowed purpose "to justify the ways of God to Man" -- is the belief in free will. Man has been created with the freedom to choose between good and evil. The corollary to this principle is that man exists in a constant state of temptation. And, as a consequence, temptation becomes a dominant theme in Milton's poetry. Milton's theory of temptation is based on the Old Testament concept of testing or proving of the spirit. The story of Abraham and Isaac is the classic example; Abraham is commanded by God to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac to prove his devotion to God. His willingness to trust God and do his bidding ultimately saves his son and results in the strengthening of his relationship with God. In Areopagitica, Milton's great weapon in the war against restrictive licensing of printing, he expresses his belief in the necessity for this type of testing of the spirit in a now famous passage:

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial and trial is by what is contrary...

Each major poem explores the dynamics of a temptation. In Comus, one of the early significant works, the temptation episode is
the focus of the action. It is here that we first can distinguish Milton's characteristic method of portraying the tempting forces of evil. Comus, the charming advocate of sensuality, urges the virtuous Lady to drink from his glass. Though the Lady refuses to be swayed by his argument, Comus appears to voice the more attractive philosophy.

Milton's greatest work, the epic Paradise Lost, is built around a series of temptations. The consummate portrait of evil is, of course, Satan. He has introduced sin into Heaven by succumbing to the desire to be greater than God. When we first encounter Satan at the beginning of the poem he is recovering from the War in Heaven. Unrepentant, though vanquished, he vows, "To wage by force or guile eternal War / Irreconcilable to our grand Foe" (I, 121, 122). The first act of this insidious war is the corruption of Man. Satan uses cunning and wily rhetoric to prey upon the innocent and credulous Eve. Eve's sin, like Satan's, is an overreaching of her proper place when she questions God's ordinance (IX, 745-779).

The fallen Eve-tempts Adam who, as Milton points out, is not taken in by her "bland words" (IX, 855). Yet, he chooses to sin with her. In rationalizing his choice, we find the same willingness to question God's decrees coupled with the same desire to rise above man's ordained place in the scheme of things: "To us, as likely tasting to attain / Proportional ascent, which cannot be / But to be Gods, or Angel Demi-gods" (IX, 935-937). Through these temptations, Man falls from Grace and is banished from Paradise. Evil and the state of temptation become constant elements in his new world.
In *Paradise Regained*, once more the subject is the temptation of Man, but of the New Man, Christ. Again, we meet Satan, but a Satan lacking his former fire and fascination. Christ brushes away Satan's inducements almost irritabley. There is no suspense about his answers. The success of Milton's poetry to interest the reader very often hinges on his ability to make the dilemma of temptation dramatically exciting and psychologically effective. Here, Milton's style lacks many of the devices that create the compelling portrait of the instigator of man's downfall in *Paradise Lost*. We feel this loss in a parallel lack of concern about involvement in the temptations of Christ.

*Samson Agonistes*, the last major poetic work that will be discussed, begins like *Paradise Lost* with the aftermath of a fateful temptation. Samson, the giant warrior, has yielded to Dalila and revealed the secret of his strength. In so doing, he has betrayed his duty to God and brought about his own capture by the enemy, her people. Now blind, and in chains, he must face the temptation of despair.

In dealing with the theme of temptation in these poems, Milton is at pains to expose the seductive nature of sin and the insidious workings of evil. He accomplishes his task so skillfully that many have been taken in by the advocates of evil. Satan, Dalila and even Comus all have their spokesmen who complain of unfair treatment. A.J.A. Waldock and a whole body of critics find much to admire in the Satan of *Paradise Lost*. Waldock even goes so far as to accuse Milton of "degrading" Satan in a highly artificial manner. Comus has long been seen as much more attractive than the Lady. As for Dalila,
Milton's portrayal of this temptress is so successful that there is the danger of accepting her at her own evaluation. Ms. Nicolson for one describes her as a "Philistine patriot". 3

In answering the claims of the Satanists, Patrick Murray condemns the many readers who reject Milton's authority. His criticism may well be applied to all advocates of the devil's position, for they all seem to fall into the error of taking the character out of context:

... Since Paradise Lost is first and foremost a poem, Milton's success or failure in making his thesis appeal to the imagination of the reader ought to be judged in poetic terms, and not on the evidence of a prose analysis. An examination of the evaluative imagery of the poem shows how Milton directs the responses of his readers -- those at least who are willing to respond to the poetry -- to the protagonists ... The function of the poetry in forwarding Milton's design has been virtually ignored by adverse critics of the poem. 4

That Milton's tempters can find support among highly intelligent and literate critics -- critics who argue their points most convincingly -- only serves to strengthen our appreciation of Milton's poetic genius.

It has been asserted thus far in the introduction that Milton employs specific methods in portraying the conflicting forces of good and evil. And it has also been implied that an awareness of these methods is necessary for a complete understanding of Milton's views on the role of evil and temptation in the world.

The poetic technique employed by Milton may be defined most simply as the building up of a network of images dealing mainly with references to sound and sight. Of course, the particular use of such sensuous imagery would be very appropriate in any poem but for Milton's
purposes it is also psychologically valid. For it is these two
senses upon which we rely most critically in making decisions and
judgements. And that is what Milton's poetry is all about -- Good,
Evil and the choice between.

The forces of evil are shown through a variety of ways as
having defective perception. They do not, or rather, will not "hear"
or "see". There is also the dramatic tension created by the constant
danger that other characters in the poetry are vulnerable to faulty
perception. However, the Good characters and certain didactic devices,
such as the Epic Voice, in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained and
the Chorus in Samson Agonistes illuminate the truth. This is part of
the difficulty for many readers of Milton. By refusing to accept
Milton's didactic style and authority they are left to rely on their
own all too fallible perception.

The network of images serves structurally to provide an
underlying unity to the poems. But, most importantly, these images
define Evil as distinguished from Good. This language also helps to
duplicate the process of temptation. These functions of the imagery
can best be seen through a detailed analysis of the individual poems.
Thus, the following chapters will deal with the use of sight and sound
imagery in Comus, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes.
FOOTNOTES (INTRODUCTION)


CHAPTER I

COMUS

Comus, one of Milton's earlier and lesser creations, has suffered a great deal from the energies of overzealous critics. Robert Adams deals ably with this tendency "to overread" Comus. He stresses that the work must be viewed in the context of its genre and of its historical purpose.

As a masque, Comus is concerned with spectacle and music; dramatic elements are of secondary importance to pageant and song. The characters neither are individualized on a personal level, nor are seen to develop during the course of the action; they are types in a moral allegory. Each role is tailored to the demands of Milton's commission, for the masque was to be presented on the occasion of the formal inauguration of Lord Egerton, first Earl of Bridgewater, as Lord President of Wales.

As befits the argument of a masque, the concepts discussed were orthodox and familiar to the contemporary audience. The subject of the conflict in Comus is the old theme of the struggle between Good and Evil -- here, represented by Temperance and Excess. As Marjorie Nicolson states, disposing of critics who belabor this aspect of Comus:

The "ideas" expressed by the Brothers, the Attendant Spirit, and the dialogue between the Lady and Comus, were
the veriest commonplaces -- most of them clichés taught to young men in the schools and universities. It is not therefore the form nor the subject matter that should be emphasised in exploring Comus. It is in the use of the language in this early work that we can distinguish Milton's artistic potential to be realized in his great epics.

An examination of the language of Comus reveals the fundamental functions of the imagery. The classical images are an integral element of the masque. Beautiful, delicate expression is a major requirement of the genre. Also, an obvious demand for imagery is found within the pastoral conventions which provide the framework of the plot. The Lady is lost in the wood and both the Attendant Spirit and Comus assume the Shepherd's cloak. Comus intends to beguile the Lady while the Attendant Spirit comes to protect and guide the virtuous soul.

It is significant that the forces of Virtue and Vice adopt a similar role to achieve their diverse purposes. For a closer study of Milton's language shows that the opposing sides in the conflict employ a common system of images. An analysis of the sound and sight imagery in particular uncovers an underlying network of figurative language that performs a basic function in lending unity to the work. More importantly for our purposes however, we find that this imagery serves to identify what Milton envisages in the concepts of Temperance and Excess.

In comparing the descriptions of the revelry of Comus and his followers given by the stage directions, by Comus himself, by the Lady, and by the Attendant Spirit, we find that all make references
to sound. The stage directions inform us that Comus and his monstrous band "... come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with Torches in their hands." But it is immediately apparent that Comus is insensible to the noise -- and the depravity of his followers. He rejoices in the fun: "Meanwhile welcome Joy and Feast, / Midnight shout and revelry, / Tipsy dance and Jollity." (102-104); "Come, knit hands, and beat the ground, / In a light fantastic round" (143, 4).

In direct contrast, the Lady on hearing the noise remarks: "... methought it was the sound / Of Riot and illmanag'd Merriment ..." (171, 2). She later describes it as "the tumult of loud Mirth" (202).

The Attendant Spirit, alert to Comus' corrupting influence, describes him to the brothers by using sound images:

... night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
Like stabi'd wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bow'rs.
(532-536)

He tells the brothers about the capture of their sister by recreating what he heard. The peaceful beauty of the shepherd's "rural minstrelsy" (547) is interrupted by "... the wonted roar ... that fill'd the Air with barbarous dissonance" (549, 550).

The raucous noise of Vice is further emphasized when the Attendant Spirit describes the Lady's song -- the voice of Virtue. Following a "sudden silence":

...
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a stream of rich distill'd Perfumes,
And stole upon the Air, that even. Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wish't she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displac't. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death.
(555-562)

It is interesting that Comus reveals a vulnerability to Virtue
in his response to the Lady's song:

Can any mortal mixture of Earth's mold
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidd'n residence.
(244-248)

Further, in his comparison of the Lady's song to the songs
of his mother Circe, the Enchantress, we learn that he can indeed
distinguish between Temperance and Excess:

Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself,
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.
(260-264)

We cannot help but recall this scene when we encounter a similar
situation in Paradise Lost. Satan is overcome by the innocence and
beauty of the unfallen Eve at work in the Garden of Eden. He hesitates
before hardening his resolve to bring about the destruction of mankind.

The Satan of Paradise Regained exhibits the same awareness of
good in his description of Christ to his followers:

If he be Man by Mother's side at least
With more than human gifts from Heav'n adorn'd
Perfections absolute, Graces divine,
And amplitude of mind to greatest Deeds.
(PR II, 136-139)
He recognizes the truth of Christ's divine responses to his temptations. He experiences momentary confusion and is briefly overcome by the power of good. But, like the Satan of *Paradise Lost*, he shakes off his stupor to embrace again his evil designs.

Similarly, Comus is attracted by the Lady; her song enchants him. Later in their confrontation her words will overpower him, but he cannot, or rather, will not comprehend her. He seeks to destroy the very beauty that has enthralled him. His reaction to her song is simply the resolution to possess her: "I'll speak to her / And she shall be my Queen" (264-265). Evil recognizes beauty, or the good, but being evil, must defile and destroy good.

As Comus and his followers are "deaf" so we find that the monsters are "blind". The attendant Spirit informs us in his opening speech that after drinking Comus' "orient liquor" his victims undergo a significant change:

Soon as the Potion works, their human count'nance
Th' express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd
Into some brutish form of Wolf, or Bear,
Or Ounce, or Tiger, or Hog, or bearded Goat,
All other parts remaining as they were.
(68-72)

The potion dulls the sensibilities and distorts the perception:

And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
(73-77)

Having succumbed to the temptation to drink ("through fond intemperate
thirst", we note) the traveler becomes incapable of apprehending Virtue because he sees and hears through a veil of dissipation.

Comus has blinded himself to the appearance of his crew as his address to them in the opening scene indicates: "We that are of purer fire / Imitate the Starry Choir " (111-112). In our reading of the masque, we must imagine the dramatic visual effect of such language directed to "a rout of Monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild Beasts, but otherwise like Men and Women, their Apparel glistening " (stage directions). He waves his group away as the Lady approaches because "Our number may affright" (148). Surely it is the sight of this horde of beastly creatures that would frighten the Lady! Later, at his palace, Comus tries to convince the Lady that what he offers is an idyllic existence:

Here dwell no frowns, nor anger, from these gates
Sorrow flies far: See, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in Primrose-season.

(667-671)

Yet he and his crew are quite apparently bestialized and totally unable to "see" and "hear" as the recurrent framework of imagery emphasizes. The Lady who possesses the "clear eye" of Virtue has no difficulty in distinguishing their brutishness when she sees them: "What grim aspects are these, / These ugly-headed Monsters?" (694, 695).

Our attention tends to focus on the main temptation of the Lady. However, in Milton's view of the human condition, temptation
is a constant element. There is a continuous trying and testing of the human soul. Mr. Fletcher suggests that this element is basic to the plot of the masque. The series of crises encountered by the young Egertons is patterned upon the traditional religious trial of the faithful:

Comus, which moves toward the baptismal sacrament of its penultimate scene, is a drama of initiation: the trial of the Lady and her brothers in the "heavenly footrace", where, beset by wandering paths and dark ways in the wood, they have to pass through error, in order to come home to their parents. We might call this action a rite of passage, at the end of which the children have "grown up" and now masters of Ludlow Castle along with their parents, can join the town revels.

And so we find that the Lady, tired, thirsty and alone in the wood, is tempted to let fear undermine her faith long before Comus appears to threaten her virtue. The brothers must battle a similar confusion of the senses. Man's vulnerability to his environment results in a habitual state of temptation. Again, Milton relies heavily on sound and sight imagery to convey his idea.

The eye can be blinded by external darkness. The Lady despairs "in the blind mazes of this tangl'd Wood" (181). The brothers are hampered by darkness: "Unmuffle ye faint stars" (331). Silence confounds them as well: "Or if our eyes / Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear . . ." (343, 344).

The eye and the ear can also be misled by fantasy created by dark and silence. The Lady experiences these fears:
A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes and beck'ning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On Sands and Shores and desert Wildernesses.
(205-209)

Man is weak and prey to fears and apprehensions but Milton stresses that we are never tried beyond our capabilities. The Lady is able to banish her bewilderment by calling on Faith, Hope and Chastity. We remark that it is "pure'ey'd Faith," and that she sees Chastity: "And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity, / I see ye visibly " (215-216). Her belief in the power of Virtue to withstand such confusion is echoed later by her brother. He does not feel that "the single want of light and noise" (369), barring real danger, will harm her: "Virtue could see to do what, Virtue would / By her own radiant light, though Sun and Moon / Were in the flat Sea sunk" (373-375).

We are quite convinced, then, of the power of Virtue to overcome fear of darkness, silence and the thoughts occasioned by such conditions. But the Lady must fight not only external confusion of the senses. Comus uses "... dazzling Spells... Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion, / And give it false presentments" (154-156).

The enchanting nature of Vice is a dominant theme in the poem. The Lady is, indeed, quite taken in by the simple shepherd lad who so kindly offers her aid. Dramatic tension is aroused as she follows him to rest, while he supposedly rounds up her brothers.

The brothers argue this enchanting aspect of Vice during their rather too long and too formal discussion of the dangers besetting
their lost sister. The Second Brother states that Beauty needs the protection of an "unenchanted eye" (395). The Elder Brother counters by describing the "hidden strength" (415) that the Lady possesses. Virtue, here embodied in the concept of Chastity, is stronger than Vice and can indeed enchant Vice (449-452). The phrase "rigid looks of Chaste austerity" (450) is of particular interest. Once more an image based on the faculty of sight is stressed.

In the same section the Elder Brother goes on to explain that Heaven guards the chaste soul: "And in clear dream and solemn vision / Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear" (457-458). Chastity, through the intervention of Heaven, is provided with a true Eye and a true Ear when assailed by the enchanting powers of Vice.

As we have seen, Virtue can defend itself ably against external and fanciful confusion of the senses. But against the dazzling spells of Vice the chaste soul is aided by Heaven to "see" and "hear" clearly. We are never tempted beyond our endurance. Heaven will send support to the embattled soul. This reading of Comus might explain the slight awkwardness of the concluding line of the masque: "Or if Virtue feeble were, / Heav'n itself would stoop to her" (1022-1023).

The Lady herself is quite aware of her superior strength. She describes her immunity to Vice by reference to a sight image:

Fool, do not boast,
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immacl'd, while Heav'n sees good.

(662-665)
In the temptation scene which follows, we find the first major episode in Milton’s works of direct confrontation between the tempter and the tempted. Comus speaks very persuasively; his argument, on the surface, appears to be more attractive and plausible than the Lady’s steadfast righteousness. This has lead to misinterpretation and confusion for many readers as these comments indicate:

It is disputed who had the best of it [the argument]. Professedly the Lady, and Comus is made to admit it; but Comus speaks so well that Milton has been accused of being here (as elsewhere) on the Devil’s side without knowing it. 4

The confrontation between the Lady and Comus seems to be set in a dark wood of critical disagreement. The most popular view is that the Lady wins largely by refusing to lose and that Comus walks off with debating and poetic honours . . . 5

However, those who tend to admire Comus make a basic error in failing to realize that Milton purposely grants Comus the more appealing side in the discussion. A.E. Dyson’s remarks are helpful on this point, especially the following excerpt:

When Milton gave a devil or tempter his intellectual due, we must remember, then, that he was very far from admitting that there might be “something in” what was being said; and when he gave them their emotional due, in that their temptations really are tempting, and not mere tours de force of abstract logic, he was not revealing an inward sympathy with the sins that were being advocated. This may seem a very obvious point, yet it is often overlooked by respectable critics. 6

In Comus, therefore, as we will find later in Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes, evil as a rule speaks much more eloquently than does good — and quite rightly so for “richly
sensuous verse is more appropriate in a moral work to the bad dramatis
personaee than to the good ones.7

However credible devilish speech may appear, the reader must
be very careful to listen with a "true ear". Once alerted to Comus'
inherent deceit, the flaws and imperfections in his argument become
apparent. Comus mistakes the Lady's words and labels her among the
Stoics and Cynics:

O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoic Fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic Tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.
(706-707)

He is "deafened" by his sensuality and cannot, or more precisely, will
not comprehend the Lady's case for Temperance. Mr. Rajan's detailed
discussion of Comus' speech about Nature's bounties helps us to dis-
cern the ridiculous quality of Comus' theories and his "tipsy" logic.8
He also comments on the ironic twist of Comus' concluding lines (754-
755):

This is Milton's characteristic employment of
the devil's rhetoric and is essentially the same
in Paradise Lost, as in Comus. The voice deepens,
the depth of misunderstanding is more powerful
but to the vigilant reader, the speaker judges
himself in the very language that he finds to
express himself.9

False language is a traditional metaphor for sin and for Milton
it becomes his primary technique of characterizing evil particularly
in the temptation scenes. Evil characters like Comus are presented
dramatically and permitted to speak charmingly and convincingly.
Meanwhile, visible fact, the commentary of an epic voice or other
devices, or the responses of characters like the Lady, deny the attractive words. We are made to listen more closely and realize the sophistry and irrationality of the devil's inducements.

An awareness that there are metaphorical implications in the type of speech given to each character can also help us to understand the Lady's position in the argument more clearly. She has been accused not only by Comus himself, but also by all too many readers of defending an extreme of chastity. A careful reading of her answers to Comus, remembering that the characters and the situation are being portrayed within an allegorical context, should be sufficient to combat this point. As sensuous language is proper to a sensualist, so rational, unpretentious language befits a virtuous soul. Mr. Dyson maintains that one should not be so dazzled by Comus' oratory as to fail to appreciate the artistic value of the Lady's words:

The outstanding qualities of her answer to Comus are clarity of diction, precision of thought and rightness of moral content. These qualities are set in balance against the sensuous, suasive and insidious style of Comus and are dramatically very fitting and appropriate. Only the critic who is unwilling either to believe in the spiritual values of which Milton is writing, or to suspend his disbelief, will find the Lady's style less artistically acceptable than that of Comus. 10

There are other proofs that militate against a harsh interpretation of the Lady, and not surprisingly these proofs rely upon sight and sound imagery. The Lady is not averse to pleasure. After she has been freed by Sabrina, the Attendant Spirit hurries her away
to partake in the celebration (950 ff.). She enjoys a temperate
eexpression of joy and gaiety in song and dance, in contrast to the
raucous behaviour of Comus and his band. Again, it must be stressed
that we are reading Comus rather than seeing and hearing it performed
as it was designed to be presented. Full weight must be given to a
consideration of the impact of the song and dance sequences on eluci-
dating the theme.

Fashioning the conflict in Comus in terms of sight and sound
imagery has many artistic benefits beyond the basic task of conveying
the theme. Because hearing and sight are foremost among the senses,
they are effective in any use of figurative language. Moreover, there
is a definite emphasis on spectacle and song inherent in the genre of
the masque that functions well against the background of sight and
sound images.

Also, by portraying man's vulnerability to false perception
through such language Milton taps a well-spring of universal experience.
Everyone has suffered the confusion of darkness and silence and the
fantasies conjured up in such an atmosphere. The Lady's fear and fore-
boding alone in the dark wood is totally credible. We identify
immediately with her uneasiness, for we too cannot prevent a certain
superstitious questioning of these senses to which we are so enslaved
and which so often fail us. The mirage, optical illusions, and echoes
are well-known phenomena.

We are also aware that advertising through elaborate packaging
and carefully calculated words exerts an extensive influence on our
lives. Comus' tactics of disguise and silver-tongued eloquence are a daily reality for the modern consumer. In using such imagery, Milton captures the essence of sin so that we today are able to recognize the truths of Comus despite the passage of time.

Comus is an early and minor work created within the requirements of the genre of the masque for a particular occasion. But in the methods used to present evil and temptation, we can glimpse techniques at work that will be used again, though much more skillfully, in the later epics.
FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER I)


6 A.E. Dyson, "The Interpretation of Comus" in Diekhoff, p. 107.

7 Dyson, p. 107.

8 Rajan, pp. 33, 34.

9 Rajan, p. 35.

10 Dyson, pp. 119, 120.
CHAPTER II

THE CHARACTERS OF PARADISE LOST:
SIGHT AND SOUND IMAGERY

Paradise Lost like all great works of art has been the subject of a vast amount of critical commentary. And because it is great, both in ideas and poetic skills, it contains the elements that admit widely divergent opinions to be held and disputed. All of these critical opinions have a similar value in that they help either directly or indirectly to uncover aspects of the poem that one reader alone could never hope to consider and research. For example, Waldock's charge that Milton "degrades" Satan has inflamed the long-standing controversy over Satan's character. Any major critic following Waldock has felt some obligation to answer his radical statements. The ensuing body of criticism has thus explored Satan in a way that was never before required.

This brief appraisal of the value of literary criticism offers a justification for what is to follow. It explains why indeed there should be one more discussion of Satan, evil and temptation. Further argument for supporting this endeavour is expressed by Mrs. Ferry in her foreword to Milton's Epic Voice. One of her conscious critical assumptions is that no poem can be read too carefully (although detailed discussion of the workings of language requires tact and judgment like any other social act), that it is still possible to learn more about Milton's style, and that

1
the only way to meet intelligent objections to *Paradise Lost* is to approach more closely the heart of the poem by analysis of its language.  

It is hoped that the following approach to *Paradise Lost* will add a further perspective on Milton's greatest poetic achievement.

Our first consideration in any discussion of the language of *Paradise Lost* must be an awareness of the role of the epic voice, for it is the ultimate authority in helping us to comprehend the argument. Mrs. Ferry in her extensive study of the function of the voice suggests that this particular device was one major reason in Milton's decision to employ the epic form for the story of Man's fall.

The epic voice is very conscious of its role and assumes an attitude of authority based on the knowledge of divine inspiration. The nature of this inspiration is explored in the prologues to Books I, III, VII and IX. As we might expect, Milton uses the traditional metaphors of song and vision as he explains his purposes and asks for divine aid. Characteristically, however, he exploits these metaphors to the fullest. The implications he establishes in the use of sound and sight imagery here will be reflected throughout the poem.

In the prologue to Book I, the narrator calls upon the heavenly muse to sing for him. He asks for help with his adventurous song:

\[
\text{I thence}
\]
\[
\text{Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous Song,}
\]
\[
\text{That with no middle flight intends to soar}
\]
\[
\text{Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues}
\]
\[
\text{Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme.}
\]
\[
(I, 12-16)
\]

The Holy Spirit is also invoked. The narrator asks for instruction and to partake in his superior powers: "What in me is dark / Illumine,
what is low raise and support" (I, 22-23): "Say first, for Heav'n
 hides nothing from thy view / Nor the deep Tract of Hell" (I, 27-28).

In Book III, the voice invokes the divine light which is identified ambiguously with God and the Spirit. He asks for special aid to undertake the task of "singing" of God and Heaven. Within this passage there is a moving expression of the poet's frustration at the physical blindness that hampers him. This, of course, has biographical interest for the reader, but Milton's art expands the metaphorical implications of the reference. His blindness serves to place him in the tradition of the blind seer:

nor sometimes forget
Those other two equall'd with me in Fate,
So were I equall'd with them in renown,
Blind Thamyris and blind Maeonides
And Tiresias and Phineus: Prophets old.

(III, 32-36)

His sorrow at the loss of sight is alleviated by this awareness. Physical blindness paradoxically leads to an increased ability to perceive divine truths.

The voice concludes the invocation by asking the celestial light to instruct him, a passage that again is replete with eye imagery:

So much the rather thou Celestial Light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irraditate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.

(III, 51-55)

The Prologue to Book VII begins the second half of the poem. This time Urania is invoked. Here the emphasis lies in a contrast between the inspired singing of the poet and the unseemly noise of his
enemies. This passage may be a biographical reference to the period of his reaction to the Stuart Restoration, but like the allusion to his blindness mentioned above, Milton universalizes his experience to encompass fuller interpretations. The noise of Sin opposes the voice of Good; the prophet is seldom hearkened to or accorded the reverence that is his due as a messenger of divine truth:

Still govern thou, my Song,
Urania, and fit audience find, though few.
But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
Of Bacchus and his Revellers, the Race.
Of that wild Rout that tore the Thracian Bard
In Rhodope, where Woods and Rocks had Ears
To rapture, till the savage clamor drown'd
Both Harp and Voice; nor could the Muse defend
Her Son. So fail not thou, who thee implores:
For thou art Heav'nly, shee an empty dream.
(VII, 30-39)

Book IX contains the climax of the poem and therefore the voice again inserts a reminder of its presence and his authority. Again Milton employs the traditional type of the singing visionary whose eye and ear are inspired from above. The song changes mood: "I now must change / Those Notes to Tragic" (IX, 5, 6). There is a further plea for help from the heavenly muse who "dictates" to him while he sleeps.

The main purposes of these introductory passages is to establish beyond question the authority of the voice and to emphasize our awareness of its control of the poem. As we read these prologues we learn that the voice's vision and words are divinely directed and therefore we are constrained to accept its comments and interpretation of the story.
For many readers the voice's presence is an annoyance, an unwelcome intrusion, something to be ignored. It has been described as a poetic failure on Milton's part. However a refusal to understand the role of the poetic voice invariably leads to a misreading of the poem. Mrs. Ferry makes the point that each speech must be read in context:

The narrative voice is as deliberate an invention as the other characters in the poem and essential to its meaning. For everything which is not actually said by this narrator—the speeches of the characters to themselves or to one another—is reported and interpreted by him; and therefore only when we have determined who is speaking in the narrative, descriptive, and discursive passages, and to whom, can we evaluate the mood and meaning of the poem.

A word may be inserted here on Mr. Fish's view of *Paradise Lost* as described in his work, *Surprised by Sin*. Of particular concern is his idea that Milton's method is to recreate in the mind of the reader (which is, finally, the poem's scene) the drama of the fall, to make him fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam's troubled clarity, that is to say, "not deceived".

He focuses on two patterns at work in the poem, first the reader's "humiliation" and second, his "education". In outlining this theory of the poem's development he expresses his belief in Milton's deliberate control of our responses. He makes a strong case for the role of the epic voice in this procedure. In his analysis of the function of the epic voice, particularly in Books I and II where Satan's attraction is most insidious, Mr. Fish's views are very helpful.

With an awareness of the omnipresence and authority of the epic voice firmly fixed in our minds, we can now proceed to an examination of the individual characters in the poem.
S a t a n

The character of Satan in *Paradise Lost* is perhaps the most difficult to comprehend of all Milton's characters, for he is the instigator of evil, "the Author of all ill" (II, 381). In Books I and II we find much to admire and pity in Satan. Superficially we are impressed by his rousing speeches, his heroic bearing in defeat, his resolution, endurance and leadership. It is not difficult to understand that he could lead a "third part of Heaven's host" to rebel, nor is it surprising that he can seduce some critics into defending him. However, as we shall see, the epic voice inserts a continuous background commentary that eventually undermines Satan's magnificent first impression. Slowly the visual images force us to look deeper and become disenchanted. We listen more carefully and perceive Satan's basic deceit.

Our first encounter with Satan is contained in a brief but striking three lines: Significantly, we read his character in his eyes:

Round he throws his baleful eyes
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay
Mist with obdurate pride and steadfast hate.
(I, 56-58)

The poem immediately moves on to a description of hell which switches our attention from Satan, but Milton has succinctly captured Satan for us in this first physical portrait. Two aspects of visual imagery are incorporated to achieve this effect, passive (appearance) and active (viewpoint). We see Satan's evil while realizing that his perception is distorted by his pride and hatred.
Mr. Peter expresses a totally opposite reaction to this favourable assessment of Milton's first portrait of Satan:

Our very first glimpse of Satan as a character, the first action he performs, 'is phrased in such a way as to invite a reader's hesitation... In which of its two senses is 'witness'd to be accepted here? Both seem unnatural. If the word means 'bare witness to' or 'revealed' (its older sense) the lines presuppose extraordinarily expressive eyes, capable of projecting almost any combination of 'huge' emotions. In view of the darkness - which, if 'visible' (63), is also 'utter' (72) - there even seems to be some suggestion (cf. 'sparkling blaz'd, line 194) that they are phosphorescent. If on the other hand 'witness'd means 'saw', how could recumbent forms 'Thick as Autumnal Leaves' contrive to express 'dismay or 'pride', particularly again when all is dark? Are Satan's eyes like fireworks, or a cat's?'

It would seem that here as elsewhere in his discussion of Paradise Lost, Mr. Peter disregards the emotive qualities of language and demands logical consistencies where no such consistencies are required. However, as with other critics such as Waldock and Empson, his negative statements prove very valuable in that they force us to reexamine our opinions of the poem.

Throughout Books I and II, the imagery that describes Satan's appearance while it conveys his power, endurance and strength is on the whole very unattractive. For example, this long verse passage culminates in an epic simile likening him to a serpentine sea monster:

Thus Satan talking to his nearest Mate
With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes
That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides
Prone on the Flood, extended long and large
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk and huge
As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that war'd on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the Den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th'Ocean stream:  
Him haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam.  
The Pilot of some small night-founder'd Skiff,  
Deeming some Island, oft, as Seamen tell,  
With fixed Anchor in his scaly rind  
Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night  
Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delays.  
(I, 192-208)

Satan is also depicted as a tyrant (II, 428), and a sultan (I, 348).  
The most compelling portrait of Satan is structured to enlighten the unwary reader. His outward physical appearance gives evidence of his previous beauty:

He above the rest  
In shape and gesture proudly eminent  
Stood like a Tow'ri: his form had yet not lost  
All her Original brightness, nor appear'd  
Less than Arch-Angel ruin'd, and th' excess  
Of Glory obscur'd: As when the Sun new ris'n  
Looks through the Horizontal misty Air  
Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon,  
In dim Eclipse disastrous twilight sheds  
On half the Nations, and with fear of change  
Perplexes Monarchs. Dark'n'd so, yet shone  
Above them all th' Arch-Angel.  
(I, 589-600)

We feel sorrow and sympathy for this Angel fallen so far from his eminence. Our sympathy is sustained as the description focuses on the face in almost cinematic fashion:

but his face  
Deep scars of Thunder had intrencht, and care  
Sat on his faded cheek, but under Brows  
Of dauntless courage.  
(I, 600-603)

However, the sudden emergence of the telling phrases in the next lines -- "and considerate Pride / Waiting revenge: cruel his eye ..." (I, 603-604), releases us from the spell of momentary sympathy for Satan. We are shocked back into a consciousness of his thorough-going evil.
The sight imagery here again moves effectively from passive description to the active presentation of Satan's evil viewpoint.

In the next few lines, Satan again threatens to elicit our sympathy as he reflects grief and sorrow at the lamentable state of his followers. But the voice intrudes to neutralize the effect; Satan's responsibility for the situation is repeatedly thrust forward. It is "his crime", "his fault", "his revolt":

... but [He] cast
Sighs of remorse and passion to behold
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd
For ever now to have their lot in pain,
Millions of Spirits for his fault amerc't
Of Heav'n, and from Eternal Splendors flung
For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood,
Thir Glory wither'd.
(I, 604-612)

We cannot fail to notice in these last lines the ironic foreshadowing of God's words in Book III, "Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell" (III, 102).

Even more important than the visual imagery used to portray Satan is the exposure of his evil through false language. At first it is the epic voice's comments that direct our reaction to Satan's speeches. The short but effective introduction to Satan first words is delivered unequivocally (I, 81-83). Although the speech is beautifully orchestrated to arouse our admiration and pity, we are saved from being swept away by the rhetoric by the epic voice's concluding comment (I, 125-126). The voice's words throughout Books I and II are stark in style and harsh in their condemnation.
of Satan to contrast with the flowery, sensuous language of evil. This simple language further serves to isolate the impact of the devils’ speeches. We are pulled up short and forced to reconsider the impact of the highflown rhetoric.

Even within the speeches themselves the lies and half-truths have struck a false note in the reader’s subconscious. The reader is culturally conditioned to accept the traditional Christian view of God as omnipotent, merciful and good, however stern he may be. Thus, phrases such as "the Potent Victor in his rage" (I, 95), "the Tyranny of Heaven" (I, 124), and the general impression of God as a tyrant seeking malicious revenge and demanding unreasonable and abject obedience do not jibe with the reader’s experience of God.

Further, Satan’s comments throughout are not only blasphemous but also unacceptable on a rational level. For example, Satan’s claim to equality with God is ridiculous: "Whom reason hath equall’d, force hath made supreme / Above his equals" (I, 248-249); He says that he is "... all but less than hee / Whom Thunder hath made greater" (I, 256, 257). However much we may admire Satan at this point, it is for his "human" qualities of endurance, courage, and leadership, and not out of any great respect for his divine qualities. He is completely fallible as his miscalculation of God’s power testifies. His assumption of equality of reason with God is thus ironically refuted by his own admission in the same breath that he claims it.

Much of Satan’s brilliant language is invested with similar elements of dramatic irony that undercut his pretensions. There are
numerous examples of this technique but among the more obvious is the paradoxical relationship of Satan to Hell:

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
(I, 254, 255)

Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.
(III, 75-78)

Another instance of irony occurs when Satan calls to his stunned followers: "Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n" (I, 330). The reader recognizes that the devils indeed are fallen and will ever remain so. In Book II, Satan asserts his position as leader of the devils by claims that we find totally incongruous:

Mee though just right and the fixt Laws of Heav'n
Did first create your Leader, next, free choice
(II, 18, 19)

Satan's language comes to stand as a metaphor for his evil nature. His words are as fascinating and magnificent as he himself is, but under careful scrutiny his basic deceit and corruption emerge. It is quite likely at this point, however, despite the efforts of the epic voice and the other indications of Satan's duplicity, that the reader has been mesmerized by Satan's grandeur and rhetoric in Books I and II. Consequently, a definitive revelation of Satan's character is placed at the very end of Book II in the encounter with Sin and Death. After this episode any vestiges of lingering admiration that we have for Satan must disappear. It is surprising that Waldock appears to ignore the Sin and Death scene altogether when he complains
of the disparity between the Satan of Books I and II and the Satan of later books:

Everybody feels that the Satan of the first two books stands alone; after them comes a break, and he is never as impressive again.

The meeting begins with Satan's disgusted reaction to the monstrous apparitions:

What thing thou art, thus double-form'd, and why
In this infernal Vale first met thou call'st
Me Father, and that Phantasm call'st my Son?
I know thee not, nor ever saw till now
Sight more detestable than him and thee.

(II, 741-745)

Satan's failure to recognize his offspring indicates his blindness to his own evil. Sin berates him and reminds him of their relationship.

Hast thou forgot me then, and do I seem
Now in thine eye so foul, once deem'd so fair
In Heav'n, when at th'Assembly, and in sight
Of all the Seraphim with thee combin'd
In bold conspiracy against Heav'n's King,
All on a sudden miserable pain
Surpris'd thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum
In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast
Throw forth, till on the left side op'ring wide,
Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright,
Then shining heav'nly fair, a Godness arm'd
Out of thy head I sprung.

(II, 747-758)

As we can see in these lines, the passage relies on visual imagery to highlight the psychological development of Sin. The dimming of Satan's vision at the birth of Sin implies the clouding of his spiritual vision:
Amazement seiz'd
All the Host of Heav'n; back they recoil'd afraid
At first, and call'd me Sin, and for a Sign
Portentous held me; but familiar grown,
I pleas'd, and with attractive graces won
The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft
Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing
Becam'st enamor'd, and such joy thou tookst
With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd
A growing burden.

(II, 758-767)

Evil becomes acceptable with association. Sin's appearance first
alarms the angels, then, as sin insinuates herself into their experience,
they come to accept and admire her. The strongest aversion to Sin
comes from Satan who conversely experiences the strongest attraction
to her later. The corrupt self-love inherent in Sin is expressed
through a disgusting incestuous alliance.

More shocking than Sin's story is the immediate acceptance by
Satan of his horrid progeny. No matter how smooth Satan's arguments
may appear from this point on, he has lost a great deal of his cred-
ibility.

The effect of this allegorical digression has been remarked
upon by many critics. Joseph H. Summers points out the influence of
this scene on the reader's first impression of Satan:

The initial appearance of Sin and Death in
Book II shocks us, I believe, chiefly because
the episode makes unmistakably clear the
latent absurdity in the "heroism" and "reality"
of Hell to which we have just responded.

Mr. Daiches makes a similar assessment of Milton's purpose and also
points out that the Hellish trio parodies the Heavenly Trinity:
but the main point of this whole episode is its demonstration of the true ugliness of all that Satan has done and produced. What is evil is unnatural and the unnatural is profoundly ugly. At the same time the behaviour and conversation of Sin, Death and Satan represent a monstrous parody of the behaviour of God and the Son in Heaven.\textsuperscript{10}

Mrs. Ferry, in her study of the types of language employed by the epic voice, analyses the reasons for the introduction of allegory at this juncture:

The one sustained allegorical episode in the epic is used to illustrate the origin and effects of Satan's Fall. It is also a representation of the nature of his vision and quality of his experience, for although the story has to be told to Satan, as well as to the reader, it originated actually within his own mind, springing from his head with the figure of Sin. In introducing us to Sin and Death, the narrator is forced to use a mode of language different from that which expresses his own unified vision because he is describing the creatures of Satan's disordered imagination. These creatures do exist but they exist as personified abstractions and not as divinely created unified beings, and therefore cannot be described in sacred metaphors.\textsuperscript{11}

In Books I and II, it is the epic voice's comments that direct our awareness of the insidious nature of Satan's evil. Later, as our credibility has been destroyed-partly through the allegorical encounter with Sin and Death, and partly because Satan's evil as it progresses is more easily recognized -- we can discern his character more independently. The voice's remarks about Satan remain as constructive aids to our understanding, but they are of lesser importance in the later books.

Having convinced his daughter to open Hell's gate for him, Satan embarks on his voyage through chaos. In contrast to the
impression of magnificent force associated with Satan earlier, here the effect is deflating:

So eagerly the fiend
O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings, or feet pursues his way,
And swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.
(II, 947-950)

From now on the physical manifestations that he is associated with descend the hierarchy of the great chain of being. He is compared to a vulture, a lion, a tiger, a toad and a serpent. Each form, more lowly than the last, depicts the influence of his willful self-degradation. He himself is painfully aware of what is happening to him:

O foulest descent! that I who erst contended
With Gods to sit the highest, am now constrain'd
Into a Beast, and mixt with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate and imbrute,
That to the hight of Deity aspir'd.
(IX, 163-167)

As Satan's physical deterioration is emblematic of his decline so his rhetoric loses its power to beguile the reader. His monomania, self-deceit and rationalizations become increasingly apparent in his soliloquies.

The distinction between good and evil is illustrated in the confrontations between good and evil characters. The epic voice's assertion that Satan has flawed vision and apprehension and is obdurately evil is more effective when acted out for us. A dynamic presentation is more convincing than the repeated judgements made by the voice.

Thus, we are shown that evil has the power to disguise itself
and succeed in deceiving good. Satan appears as a stripling to elicit information from Uriel:

So spake the false dissembler unperceiv'd;  
For neither Man nor Angel can discern  
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks  
Invisible, except to God alone,  
*By his permissive will, through Heav'n and Earth.  
(III, 681-685)

Uriel, "the sharpest-sighted Spirit of all in Heav'n" (III, 691), is completely taken in by the smooth talking devil. Although good characters perceive clearly, they may be misled or undermined by duplicity. Only God is capable of seeing all and understanding everything.

But Satan's disguise cannot prevail over his inner evil. It is so overpowering that it erupts visibly. As he meditates atop Mt. Niphates he struggles to maintain his composure:

Thus while he spake, each passion dimm'd his face,  
Thrice chang'd with pale, ire, envy and despair,  
Which marr'd his borrow'd visage, and betray'd  
Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld.  
For heav'nly minds from such distempers foul  
Are ever clear. Whereof hee soon aware  
Each perturbation smooth'd with outward calm,  
Artificer of fraud; and was the first.  
That practis'd falsehood under saintly show,  
Deep malice to conceal, couch't with revenge.  
(IV, 114-123)

The emphasis on eye imagery, and this question of the ability of good and evil characters to distinguish between reality and appearance continues as Uriel perceives Satan's treachery:

Yet not enough had practis'd to deceive  
Uriel once warn'd; whose eye pursu'd him down  
The way he went, and on th'Assyrian mount  
Saw him disfigur'd, more than could befall
Spirit of happy sort: his gestures fierce
He mark'd and mad demeanor, then alone,
As he suppos'd, all unobserv'd, unseen.
(IV, 124-130)

Uriel now sees him for what he is, although he does not realize that this devil is Satan himself. He warns Gabriel and the guard:

I describ'd his way
Bent on all speed, and markt his Aery Gait;
But in the Mount that lies from Eden North,
Where he first lighted, soon discern'd his looks
Alien from Heav'n, with passions foul obscur'd:
Mine eye pursu'd him still, but under shade
Lost sight of him.
(IV, 567-573)

Later, Satan is found whispering in Eve's ear "squat like a Toad" (IV, 800). Touched by Ithuriel's spear he is surprised into resuming his own shape. Like Uriel, the heavenly guard do not recognize "the grisly King" (IV, 821). Satan is very annoyed that these angels do not acknowledge his identity. He is not prepared to admit that his evil has impaired his glory and rendered him less than he was.

The angelic guard possess the clear eye of virtue and can see Satan's evil:

Think not, revolted Spirit, thy shape the same,
Or undiminish't brightness, to be known
As when thou stood'st in Heav'n upright and pure,
That Glory then, when thou no more wast good,
Departed from thee, and thou resembl'st now
Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul.
(IV, 835-840)

Nor are the angels taken in by Satan's lies. They have the true ear of virtuous spirits. Gabriel swiftly disposes of Satan's attempts to explain his presence on earth:
To say and straight unsay, pretending first
Wise to fly pain, professing next the Spy,
Argues no Leader, but a liar trac't,
Satan, and couldst thou faithful add?

(IV, 947-950)

Later in the poem, we will find that Abdiel shows the same awareness of evil and easily refuses Satan's rebellious suggestions.

Good recognizes and rejects evil. However, evil exhibits a strong appreciation of and attraction for good. Satan's first glimpse of the world excites admiration in him, then a backlash of spite:

Such wonder seiz'd, though after Heaven seen,
The Spirit malign, but much more envy siez'd
At sight of all this World beheld so fair.

(III, 552-554)

On seeing Adam and Eve, he is struck by their beauty and innocence. Yet, he hardens in his resolve to bring them mortal injury, rationalizing that the demands of his office force him "to do what else though damn'd I should abhor" (IV, 392). His next words in reaction to the sight of the tender lovemaking of the happy pair reveal his real malice and envy:

Aside the Devil turn'd
For envy, yet with jealous leer malign
Ey'd them askance, and to himself thus plain'd.
Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two
Imparadis't in one another's arms
The happier Eden, shall enjoy thir fill
Of bliss on bliss, while I to Hell am thrust.

(IV, 502-508)

Satan is overwhelmed by the goodness explicit in Zephon's appearance:

Abasht the Devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
Virtue in her shape how lovely, saw and pin'd
His loss.

(IV, 846-849)
However, his ego and pride resurface quickly to defeat any motions of virtue within his spirit. His sorrow is "... chiefly to find here observ'd / His lustre visibly impair'd" (IV, 849; 850). The sight of Eve momentarily stuns Satan into helpless adoration, for "in her look sums all Delight" (IX, 454). But again his final response is destructive:

But the hot Hell that always in him burns,
Though in mid Heav'n soon ended his delight,
And tortures him now more, the more he sees
Of pleasure not for him ordain'd.
(IX, 467-470)

The reliance on sight imagery in all of these examples can be clearly seen. Satan cannot bear the "sight" of good. Adam and Eve's love and happiness is "Sight hateful, sight tormenting". The beauty of the world, the innocent loveliness of Eve and the virtue of Zephoth all serve to remind him of what he has lost. Indeed, Satan's initial revolt against God was precipitated by God's anointing of the Messiah. Satan "could not bear / Through pride that sight, and thought himself impair'd" (V, 664, 665).

As we would expect, we find this use of visual imagery applied in a distinctly opposite context elsewhere in the poem. Abdiel, the faithful servant of God, is enraged by Satan's magnificent bearing as he approaches the battlefield: "Abdiel that sight endur'd not" (VI, 111).

That Satan responds to good is just one more paradox in the complex portrait of evil -- another detail that makes sin a concrete recognizable principle at work in our fallen world. Arnold Stein's view of this aspect of Satan's character provides some interesting
insights:

The good in Satan responds to, and struggles toward, the good he encounters outside him. His evil is not pure; it can win the struggle against good only by allying itself with good. The rebellion which leads to the fall is in the name of liberty, and against the name of tyranny. His remorse, pity, tears all pay homage to good, but are perverted. If we do not give Satan his due, we cannot understand the nature of his evil.12

The attraction of evil characters toward good and their perverted fallen responses is thus a major aspect of all of Milton's works. The parallels between Comus, Paradise Lost, and Paradise Regained on this subject have been pointed out earlier in the chapter on Comus.

In Books V and VI, Raphael's narration underlines the falsity of Satan's initial motivation and reasons for defying God. In the story of Satan's defection and his seduction of the angels from God's ranks, there is again a substantial use of sight and sound images.

Satan rebels because he cannot bear to see the Son exalted (V, 664). He accuses God of tyranny and subverts Beelzebub with his calculated arguments:

So spake the false Arch-Angel, and infus'd
Bad influence into th' unwary breast
Of his Associate.

(V, 694-696)

Satan's appeal to his followers is twofold -- through his appearance and his rhetoric:

But all obey'd
The wonted signal, and superior voice
Of thir great Potentate; for great indeed
His name, and high was his degree in Heav'n;
His count'rance, as the Morning Star that guides
The starry flock, allur'd them, and with lies
Drew after him the third part of Heav'n's Host.
(V, 704-710)

The use of the "true ear" metaphor recurs later in the episode in
the confrontation with Abdiel. Satan gathers his troops on a pretext
and addresses them:

For thither he assembl'd all his Train,
Pretending so commanded to consult
About the great reception of thir King,
Thither to come, and with calumnious Art
Of counterfeited truth thus held thir ears.
(V, 767-771)

While Abdiel alone stands for God, the other angels accept the
temptation to disobey God that Satan's specious arguments provide.

Abdiel's outrage is expressed in effective language images:

0 argument blasphemous, false and proud!
Words which no ear ever to hear in Heav'n
Expected, least of all from thee, ingrate,
In place thyself so high above thy Peers.
(V, 809-812)

The reunioin of Satan, Sin and Death following the successful
corruption of Man contrasts with their first meeting to give evidence
of Satan's further decline into evil. Sin has sensed Satan's victory,
a further indication of the spiritual closeness of Satan to his
offspring:

Methinks I feel new strength within me rise,
Wings growing, and Dominion giv'n me large
Beyond this Deep; whatever draws me on,
Or sympathy, or some connatural force
Powerful at greatest distance to unite
With secret amity things of like kind
By secretest conveyance.
(X, 243-249)
The unholy trinity thus rendezvous as Sin and Death are on their way to earth over the bridge they have built and Satan is returning to Hell. This time, the sinful trio recognize one another even though Satan is disguised as an Angel of light:

And now thir way to Earth they had descri'd,
To Paradise first tending, when behold
Satan in likeness of an Angel bright,
Bewtixt the Centaur and the Scorpion steering
His Zenith, while the Sun in Aries rose;
Disguised he came, but those his Children dear
Thir Parent soon discern'd, though in disguise.

(X, 325-331)

Satan shows no antipathy to his monstrous relations, nor does Death intend him harm. Rather, the meeting is a celebration of victory.

Satan is returning in triumph:

With joy
And tidings fraught, to Hell he now return'd
And at the brink of Chaos, near the foot
Of this new wondrous Pontifice, unhop't
Met who to meet him came, his Offspring dear.
Great joy was at thir meeting, and at sight
Of that stupendous Bridge his Joy increas'd.

(X, 345-351)

That Satan not only recognizes, but lovingly welcomes the horrible pair, announces the depths to which he has sunk.

The ultimate degradation of Satan comes with ironic swiftness.

At the height of his success, he is forced into the very shape he voluntarily chose for the temptation of Eve. We have seen earlier that evil can get out of control; Satan's evil thoughts unmasked his disguise as a cherub. Here, he loses all control of his physical appearance as it manifests his spiritual evil.
The passage merits examination for its technical skill. Satan returns to the great hall to deliver his news. High on his throne he still displays traces of his former angelic brightness though the epic voice qualifies the reference with the phrase "false glitter" (X, 452). He delivers a final address to his followers; he boasts of his courage and self-sacrifice and finishes with scorn for God's judgement upon him. Then, sound and sight images come into play. Ironically, the praise he expects to hear is transformed into scornful hissing:

So having said, a while he stood, expecting
Thir universal shout and high applause
To fill his ear, when contrary he hears
On all sides, from innumerable tongues
A dismal universal hiss, the sound
Of public scorn.

(X, 504-509)

The sound effectively announces a dreadful change in Satan himself; his followers share a similar fate:

For now were all transform'd
Alike, to Serpents all as accessories
To his bold Riot.

(X, 519-521)

Satan's outward appearance now accords with his inner wickedness; it is a very effective way of concluding Satan's active role in the poem.

The Devils

Because the devils are representatives of evil, Milton portrays them in much the same manner that he does Satan. The physical descriptions of the fallen angels while conveying numbers and strength do so in a pejorative fashion. They are likened to Barbarian invaders
(I, 351-355), to locusts (I, 341), and to bees (I, 768-775). But, like Satan, they still retain vestiges of their former glory. Milton forestalls any tendency to discount the power of evil by presenting the fallen angels in all their awesome splendour:

And now
Advanc' t in view they stand, a horrid front
Of dreadful length and dazzling Arms, in guise
Of Warriors old with order'd Spear and Shield,
Awaiting what command thir mighty Chief
Had to impose: he through the armed Files
Darts his experienc' t eye, and soon traverse
The whole Battalion views, thir order due,
Thir visages and stature as of Gods;
Thir number last he sums.
(I, 562-571)

The devils, like Satan, respond to demonstrations of goodness in a similar perverted manner. They too cannot bear the "sight" of good expressed in the person of Christ during the war in Heaven:

They hard'n'd more by what might most reclaim,
Grieving to see his Glory, at the sight
Took envy, and aspiring to his highth,
Stood reimbattl'd fierce, by force or fraud
Weening to prosper, and at length prevail
Against God and Messiah, or to fall
In universal ruin last.
(VI, 791-797)

The other main method of characterizing the devils is through sound references. With the unfurling of the flag and sounding of the trumpets in Hell, the fallen spirits burst forth with shouts:

At which the universal Host upsent
A shout that tore Hell's Concave, and beyond
Frighted the Reign of Chaos and old Night.
(I, 541-543)

In answer to Satan's inflammatory speech they erupt with another noisly outburst:
Highly they rag'd
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped Arms
Clash'd on thir sounding shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance toward the Vault of Heav'n.
(I, 666-669)

In response to Hammon's speech in the assembly, they offer their
fierce approval which is effectively captured in the following epic
simile:

He scarce had finisht, when such murmur fill'd
Th' Assembly, as when hollow Rocks retain
The sound of blust'ring winds, which all night long
Had rous'd the Sea, now with hoarse cadence lull
Sea-faring men o'erwatcht, whose Bark by chance
Or Pinnance anchors in a craggy Bay
After the Tempest.
(II, 284-290)

The sound imagery identified with the devils culminates effectively
when their expected applause for Satan's victorious speech is trans-
formed into the hissing of serpents (X, 504-509).

Individual devils who emerge during the conclave in Hell are
also portrayed by means of this same type of sound and sight imagery:
Moloch, the warrior, speaks brusquely, without elegance or polish.

His appearance reflects his nature:

He ended frowning, and his look denounc'd
Desperate revenge, and Battle dangerous
To less than Gods.
(II, 106-108)

Belial, on the other hand, is a consummate rhetorician and the epic
voice carefully warns us both before and after he speaks. His
appearance also indicates his superficial attractiveness:
On th' other side up rose Belial, in act more graceful and humane;
A fairer person lost not Heav'n; he seem'd
For dignity compos'd and high exploit:
But all was false and hollow; though his Tongue
Dropt Manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest Counsels: for his thoughts were low;
To vice industrious, but to Nobler deeds
Timorous and slothful; yet he pleas'd the ear,
And with persuasive accent thus began.

(II, 108-118)

Thus Belial with words cloth'd in reason's garb
Counsell'd ignoble ease, and peaceful sloth,
Not peace.

(II, 226-228)

Beelzebub, as Satan's right hand man, counsels revenge through the corruption of Man. Like Satan, he retains evidences of his former glory and it is this physical impressiveness that the epic voice stresses in introducing his speech:

With grave
Aspect he rose, and in his rising seem'd
A Pillar of State; deep on his Front engraven
Deliberation sat and public care;
And Princely counsel in his face yet shone,
Majestic though in ruin: sage he stood
With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear
The weight of mightiest Monarchies; his look
Drew audience and attention still as Night
Or Summer's Noon-tide air.

(II, 300-309)

Later, in the flashback to the war in Heaven, we learn that Beelzebub's deceitful language will convince the angels to revolt against God. He tells the suggested cause, and casts between Ambiguous words and jealousies, to sound Or taint integrity.

(V, 702-704)
God, Christ, and the Angels

To portray God acting and speaking, to try and convey divine perfection, is a tremendous challenge to Milton's capacities as a poet. In the opinion of many critics he fails; witness this comment by Frye:

In Milton, God the Father, in flagrant defiance of Milton's own theology, which tells us that we can know nothing about the Father except through the human incarnation of the Son, does speak, and with disastrous consequences. The rest of the poem hardly recovers from his speech, and there are few difficulties in the appreciation of Paradise Lost that are not directly connected with it. Further, he keeps on speaking at intervals, and whenever he opens his ambrosial mouth the sensitive reader shudders!13

In analysing Milton's method of portraying God and Christ, it is imperative to note what use he makes of the Biblical source. As we would expect, he draws heavily on traditional metaphors. God is light, too bright to gaze upon as the angels' hymn expounds (III, 375-382). He is a voice whose word becomes reality. Christ is "My word" (III, 170), the active principle of God. Raphael explains this point to Adam, later in the poem:

So spake the Almighty, and to what he spake
His Word, the Filial Godhead, gave effect.
Immediate are the Acts of God, more swift
Than time or motion, but to human ears
Cannot without process of speech be told,
So told as earthly notion can receive.
(VII, 174-179)

Milton unites this traditional imagery with his own characteristic use of sight and sound imagery. As Satan is evil and announces that evil both in his appearance and in his viewpoint, God's goodness
is supremely visible and his vision is clear and perfect. Satan speaks falsely and apprehends imperfectly while God's word is pure and good, and he comprehends everything.

In Book III, the epic voice opens the account of events in heaven with a description of God who "bent down his eye" to view the activities in his creation. This first view of God parallels our first glimpse of Satan who too is met as he gazes about him and surveys his surroundings. Milton usually depicts God in the act of surveying his creation. He is unbounded by physical, temporal or spatial strictures so that his omniscience is clearly demonstrated by such descriptive apppellations as the "Eternal eye" (V, 711).

God's perfection, though beyond representation, is indirectly revealed through his effect on the heavenly spirits who "from his sight receiv'd / Beatitude past utterance" (III, 61-62). Even Satan himself recognizes God's goodness, describing Him by means of this fitting visual image: "at whose sight all the Stars / Hide thir diminsh heads" (IV, 34-35).

The simple language of statement that God employs is contrasted with Satan's rhetoric. However, God's words are replete with significant metaphor. To the sincerely repentant man he promises: "Mine ear shall not be slow, mine eye not shut" (III, 193). Those who refuse the proffered mercy face a stern fate: "But hard be hard'n'd, blind be blinded more" (III, 200). God's word is law as Christ comments after God speaks of mercy to be granted fallen Man: "Father, thy word is past, Man shall find grace" (III, 227).
God is identified several times simply as the Voice, which like the reference to Him as an "Eternal eye" successfully suggests His mystery. In speaking to commend Abdiel, God is "a voice / From midst a Golden Cloud" (VI, 27, 28). He is a "voice" who tells the newly formed Eve to go to Adam (IV, 467). Again, he is "the Sovran voice" (VI, 56), as he instructs his angels to go into battle. The role of Christ as his "word" has been examined above.

These references to God demonstrate again that Milton relies on sight and sound imagery to create his characters. As the quotation from Frye indicates however, there are many negative responses to Milton's God. We wonder why -- if both Satan and God, indeed all of Milton's characters, are depicted through this same imagery -- why should God prove unsuccessful?

Daiches maintains that the failure of the character of God is not in the technique, but in Milton's decision to present God within a framework of logical theological statements:

Milton wants to achieve divine dignity and formality to set against the exhibitionist heroics of the fallen angels' speeches; but the result is curiously stilted. The verse in these passages of divine argument is, however, supple and adroitly manipulated. It is not on technical points of versification that Milton falls down in Book III; it is rather that here he is committing himself to logic in order to achieve his poetic intention, so that the reader, however much he wishes to read Paradise Lost as a poem, is forced to read it at this point as logical argument, and to answer back as he reads.14

Daiches also argues that the character of God loses credibility through the overuse of anthropomorphic references.15 John Peter agrees that having God speak and himself undertake much of the task of
justifying his way to men strikes a false note in the poem:

The point is not that the theology which he proceeds
to outline is unacceptable, still less unnecessary to
the poem. It is that in representing God anthropomor-
phically, and then obliging him to speak his own defences
at some length, Milton has conveyed a most unfortunate
impression of uneasiness.16

The references to Christ throughout the poem are constructed
around the same system of sight and sound images that are attributed
to God. Christ's appearance is depicted chiefly in terms of his
role as God's Son and intermediary. God may not be looked upon
directly but his divinity is mirrored in his Son:

Beyond compare the Son of God was seen
Most glorious, in him all his Father shone
Substantially express'd, and in his face
Divine compassion visibly appear'd
Love without end, and without measure Grace.

(III, 138-142)

The angelic hymn elaborates the relationship:

Begotten Son, Divine Similitude,
In whose conspicuous count'nance, without cloud
Made visible, th' Almighty Father shines,
Whom else no Creature can behold; on thee
Impress'th' effulgence of his Glory abides,
Transfus'd on thee his ample Spirit rests.

(III, 384-389)

Of particular interest is the following comment voiced by the narrator
after Christ speaks. It effectively incorporates both sound and sight
images:

His words here ended, but his meek aspect
Silent yet spake, and breath'd immortal love
To mortal men, above which only shone
Filial obedience.

(III, 266-269)
God himself makes reference to Christ's divine appearance -- the reflection of Himself -- as he addresses Christ during the war in Heaven:

Effulgence of my Glory, Son belov'd,
Son in whose face invisible is beheld
Visibly, what by Deity I am,
And in whose hand what by Decree I do,
Second Omnipotence.

(VI, 680-684)

Later, the narrator picks up this imagery in this comment which links God's speech to Christ's response:

He said, and on his Son with Rays direct
Shone full; hee all his Father full exprest
Ineffably into his face receiv'd.

(VI, 719-721)

The most complex use of visual imagery in relation to Christ occurs as he prepares for battle. His anger against the enemies of God is so great that it transforms his beautific aspect into a palpable force:

So spake the Son, and into terror chang'd
His count'nance too severe to be beheld
And full of wrath bent on his Enemies .

Nor less on either side tempestuous fell
His arrows, from the fourfold-visag'd Four,
Distinct with eyes, and from the living Wheals,
Distinct alike with multitude of eyes;
One Spirit in them rul'd, and every eye
Glar'd lightning, and shot forth pernicious fire
Among th' accurst.

(VI, 824-826, 844-850)

Mr. Summers' comment on this episode points out the importance of sound and sight imagery:
Satan and his legions hear and see the absolute power of God manifested in the Son. The sound and the sight are "infixed" in their souls, where no subterfuges or stratagems are possible; they carry absolute conviction. And they see that they are seen; they perceive this absolute power as alien to them and as hostile. They know their state.17

The language of Christ is like his Father's -- a language of statement invested with Biblical reference. He is also identified as God's active vehicle -- his word -- as the foregoing study of the character of God has indicated.

Christ appears to be a much more acceptable figure than God. Partly this is a result of his sympathetic role as the intercessor for Man. The love and mercy he expresses towards our hapless first parents contrasts with the sternness of God's judgements. More important is the fact that we already know Christ as an expositor of divine principles. To find him discussing and explaining the divine will in Heaven is perfectly in keeping with our view of him as a speaker of parables and instructor of divine truths on earth.

Just as the devils exhibit qualities similar to Satan's, so the angels reflect their allegiance to God. In appearance they are conceived of in terms of light, grace and beauty. Uriel is an "Angel bright" possessing a "radiant visage"; his unfallen nature is symbolized in his "uprightness". Zephon's "youthful beauty" overpowers the evil of Satan momentarily. The angels in Heaven reflect the Divinity:
About him all the Sanctities of Heaven
Stood thick as Stars, and from his sight receiv'd
Beatitude past utterance.

(III, 60-62)

They are seen worshipping God in song with their harps, and bending
in reverence to his authority. In Book V, there is an extended des-
cription of Raphael winging his way towards earth. The dignity and
beauty of his bearing contrasts explicitly with the earlier description
of Satan's ignominious journey from Hell. Adam's awed reaction to
the sight of the approaching angel (X, 308 ff.), as well as the
respectful acknowledgement of the other spirits, further attests to
his beauty.

Spiritual good is apparent not only in the angels' appearance
but in their speech, which is beautiful, simple and open. As has
been mentioned earlier, the hymns to God contrast with the shouts of
approval accorded Satan by his devils. Raphael and Michael both
speak to Adam in a gentle, instructive language that draws on simple
comparisons from the natural world. 18

As good characters, the angels also evidence their ability
to perceive clearly. When faced with evil in the person of Satan
surprised at Eve's ear, the angelic guard show that they possess clear
apprehension and are not taken in by his smooth lies (IV, 823 ff.).
Raphael is stern with Adam when he confesses an excess of admiration
for Eve and thus shows his own ability to perceive (VIII, 560 ff.).
Abdiel of course emerges as the supreme example of angelic righteousness
in that he withstood the temptation of Satan and the rejection of his
peers. He recognizes the evil elements in Satan's specious arguments and "stands" alone for good. The "true ear" imagery is stressed (V, 809-810). As he leaves he announces a prophetic foreshadowing of the devils' downfall, revealing the influence of his pure vision.

In contrast to the jealous and malignant malice that is the Satanic response to good, the angels express only wonder and joy in God's creation. They respond to the beauty and innocence of man (VIII, 224-228). They carry out their duties to guard and instruct man with zeal. Unlike Satan and the other spirits, they did not resent the elevation of the Messiah. Their reaction to God's voice is one of joy (III, 137). In their singing there is "no voice exempt" (III, 370).

This analysis of the representation of the angels in Paradise Lost has pointed out that Milton employs the same system of sound and sight images that has been used to portray Satan, the devils, God and Christ. The advantage of using these techniques is twofold: Not only are the characters effectively conveyed through the use of this imagery, but also, as we have seen, contrasts and comparisons between the conflicting forces of good and evil can be more easily illuminated.
The Unfallen Adam-and-Eve

In presenting Adam and Eve, Milton's major purpose is to convey the definite contrast between unfallen and fallen man. No more appropriate methods for this task could exist than those already put to work to distinguish between God and the angels and Satan and the devils. Consequently, we find that Milton relies on the established network of sound and sight imagery in his portrayal of Adam and Eve. The following analysis will deal with unfallen man. The discussion of fallen man will be deferred to the next chapter.

The Biblical references to Adam and Eve are the basis for Milton's characters, but, as with God and Christ, the aspects of the Biblical source that are emphasized are in keeping with the characteristic methods of showing good and evil. The first description of the pair is found early in Book IV. The reference to Man being made in God's image is easily discerned, as is Milton's expected amplification of the concept:

Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
Godlike erect, with native Honor clad
In naked Majesty seem'd Lords of all,
And worthy seem'd, for in thir looks Divine
The image of thir glorious Maker shone,
Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure.
(IV, 288-293)

The complementary qualities of man and woman are apparent in the nature of their physical appearance. In Milton's view, man is the rational decision maker, woman, his follower and supporter:
Not equal, as thir sex not equal seem'd;  
For contemplation hee and valor form'd,  
For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace,  
Hee for God only, shee for God in him:  
(IV, 296-299)

We notice also the reference to Adam's "Eye sublime" which informs us that Adam's perception is as clear and noble and upright as his appearance. Raphael expands the physical references introduced in this first description of the human couple as he relates to Adam the story of his origins:

There wanted yet the Master work, the end  
Of all yet done; a Creature who not prone  
And Brute as other Creatures, but endu'd  
With Sanctity of Reason, might erect  
His Stature, and upright with Front serene  
Govern the rest, self-knowing, and from thence  
Magnanimous to correspond with Heav'n,  
But grateful to acknowledge whence his good  
Descends, thither with heart and voice and eyes  
Directed in Devotion, to adore  
And worship God Supreme who made him chief  
Of all his works.  
(VII, 505-516)

Here again virtue is conveyed through the use of passive and active visual images. Man's goodness is reflected in his appearance and is illustrated by the action of "heart, voice and eyes."

The nakedness of unfallen man is repeatedly remarked upon to establish the paradox that inner virtue is the supreme adornment. We realize too, that nakedness will no longer be innocent after the fall of man. There is an insistence on man as upright and erect which again underlines that he will fall. These two details are played upon continually in order to make the reader painfully aware that he himself is fallen. It is dramatic irony of especial effectiveness for
it creates a longing in us for an unknown innocent past.

The beauty and goodness of Adam and Eve is attested to by their own interactions, by their relationship with the angels, by the responses of their environment and even through the actions of Satan. Adam tells Raphael of his first feelings for the newly created Eve whose "looks" and "Eye" reveal her nature:

Under his forming hands a Creature grew,
Manlike, but different sex, so lovely fair,
That what seem'd fair in all the World, seem'd now
Mean, or if in her Summ'd up, in her contain'd
And in her looks, which from that time infus'd
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
And into all things from her Air inspir'd
The spirit of love and amorous delight.
(VIII, 470-477)

Grace was in all her steps, Heav'n in her Eye,
In every gesture dignity and love.
(VIII, 488, 489)

Eve's account of her attraction to Adam, which quickly conquers her narcissistic self-love, has an added significance. It sets up a contrast to Satan's fascination with Sin who mirrors his "perfect image" (II, 764):

With that thy gentle hand
Seiz'd mine, I yielded, and from that time see
How beauty is excell'd by manly grace
And wisdom, which alone is truly fair.
(IV, 488-491)

Satan's attraction to the beauty of the human pair and his evil responses has been discussed at length earlier as a characteristic trait of evil. In direct contrast to his envy and hate is the angelic response to these new creatures. The angels recognize the excellence of God's creation as exemplified in man. Raphael salutes
Eve, "Hail Mother of Mankind" (V, 387). Unlike the devil he experiences no jealousy or lust for her:

Meanwhile at Table Eve
Minister'd naked, and thir flowing cups
With pleasant liquors crown'd: 0 innocence
Deserving Paradise! if ever, then,
Then had the Sons of God excuse to have been
Enamour'd at that sight; but in those hearts
Love unlibidinous reign'd, nor jealousy
Was understood, the injur'd Lover's Hell.
     (V, 443-450)

Later Raphael explains the angel's filial feelings towards man:

Nor less think wee in Heav'n of thee on Earth
Than of our fellow servant, and inquire
Gladly into the ways of God with Man:
For God we see hath honor'd thee, and set
On Man his Equal Love.
     (VIII, 224-228)

Even the vegetation and wildlife of the Garden respond to Eve's loveliness. The introduction of the pathetic fallacy before the fall prepares for the use of this device during the temptation and later to illustrate the effects of the fall on Paradise. Eve leaves Raphael and Adam talking to tend the flowers:

they at her coming sprung
And toucht by her fair tendance gladlier grew.
     (VIII, 46, 47)

The whole of creation renders homage to her natural beauty:

With Goddess-like demeanor forth she went;
Not unattended, for on her as Queen
A pomp of winning Graces waited still,
And from about her shot Darts of desire
Into all Eyes to wish her still in sight.
     (VIII, 59-62)

The speech of the fallen Adam and Eve is as clear, innocent and free of artifice as is their appearance. This Raphael informs
us is only right in that man reflects his maker:

Nor are thy lips ungraceful, Sire of men,
Nor tongue inelegant; for God on thee
Abundantly his gifts hath also pour'd
Inward and outward both, his image fair:
Speaking or mute all comeliness and grace
Attends thee, and each word, each motion forms.

(VIII, 218-223)

It is nowhere more apparent than in the natural spontaneity of Adam and Eve's hymns of adoration and reverence towards God. The dignity and tenderness of their addresses to one another also exhibits the same purity: "Sole partner and sole part of all these joys, / Dearer thyself than all" (IV, 411-412). Their mutual delight in seeing and hearing one another is stressed:

when Adam first of men
To first of women Eve thus moving speech,
Turn'd him all ear to hear new utterance flow.

(IV, 408-410)

So spake our general Mother, and with eyes
Of conjugal attraction unreprov'd,
And meek surrender, half imbracing lean'd
On our first Father.

(IV, 492-495)

With thee conversing I forget all time,
All seasons and thir change, all please alike.

(IV, 639-640)

Eve leaves Raphael and Adam talking, preferring to hear Raphael's information from Adam's lips:

Yet went she not, as not with such discourse
Delighted, or not capable her ear
Of what was high: such pleasure she reserv'd,
Adam relating, she sole Auditress;
Her Husband the Relater she preferr'd
Before the Angel, and of him to ask
Chose rather: hee, she knew, would intermix
Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute
With conjugal Caresses, from his Lip.
Not Words alone pleas'd her.
(VIII, 48-57)

Adam confesses to Raphael the weakness that the sight of Eve engenders in him: ". . . here only weak / Against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance" (VIII, 532-533). Indeed, it is the delight in Eve's virtue expressed in her beauty and charm that proves the downfall of Adam. He relinquishes his rightful role as decision maker and acquiesces in her dangerous desire to taste independence. Not surprisingly, one of his most persuasive arguments to convince her to stay with him makes extensive use of sight images:

I from the influence of thy looks receive
Access in every Virtue, in thy sight
More wise, more watchful, stronger, if need were
Of outward strength; while shame, thou looking on,
Shame to be overcome or over-reach
Would utmost vigor raise, and rais'd unite.
(IX, 309-314)

Adam's joy in associating with Raphael and growing in the knowledge of Creation is expressed through ear imagery:

Thy words
Attentive, and with more delighted ear
Divine instructor, I have heard, than when
Cherubic Songs by night from neighboring Hills
Aereal Music send.
(V, 544-548)

Great things, and full of wonder in our ears,
Far differing from this World, thou hast reveal'd
Divine Interpreter.
(VII, 70-72)

The Angel ended, and in Adam's Ear
So charming left his voice, that he a while
Thought him still speaking, still stood fixt to hear.
(VIII, 1-3)
For while I sit with thee, I seem in Heav'n,
And sweeter thy discourse is to my ear
Than fruits of Palm-tree pleasantest to thirst
And hunger both, from labor, at the hour
Of sweet-repast; they satiate, and soon fill,
Though pleasant, but thy words with Grace Divine
Imbu'd, bring to thir sweetness no satiety.
(VIII, 210-216)

In unfallen man, appearance and perception, speech and
hearing are all invested with his virtue. We have seen man's un-
affected goodness and responded to his simplicity. Milton succeeds
in portraying this innocence without making Adam and Eve appear
foolish, primitive or childish. With the reader's sympathy thus
engaged the events of the fall take on greater poignancy and relevance.

It is hoped that the foregoing analysis of the characters in
Paradise Lost has helped to elucidate the thesis that Milton does rely
to a significant extent on a basic system of sound and sight images to
portray his characters. The next chapter will carry on the study of
this figurative language. The analysis will be restricted to the
specific context of the temptation scenes which have been exempted from
this general character review and to the discussion of the fallen
Adam and Eve.
FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER II)


2. Ferry, p. xiii.

3. Ferry, p. 15.

4. Waldock, Paradise Lost and Its Critics, p. 81 ff.

5. Ferry, p. 20.


8. Waldock, p. 81.


11. Ferry, pp. 131, 132.


15 Daiches, p. 184.
16 Peter, p. 11.
17 Summers, p. 135.
18 Ferry, pp. 71-73.
CHAPTER III

THE TEMPTATION THEME IN PARADISE LOST

Milton's avowed purpose in Paradise Lost is to "justify the ways of God to men" (I, 25). In his view God's way with his creatures, angels and men alike, appears to revolve around the concept of free will. As a result the poem consciously explores the paradoxes involved in freedom. In Book III where much of the theology of the poem is expressed by the Voice of God, the doctrine of free will is formally presented for us in detail. The following explanation emerges as God first foresees the fall of man and then recalls the rebellion of Satan and the angels:

I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
Such I created all th' Ethereal Powers
And Spirits, both them who stood and them who fail'd;
Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love,
Where only what they needs must do, appear'd,
Not what they would?

(III, 97-106)

An element inherent in the freedom enjoyed by both Man and angel is an awareness of that freedom. Raphael in explaining the precarious nature of relationships with God to Adam reveals in the process that the angels realize the responsibility of God-given choice:

God made thee perfet, not immutable;
And good he made thee, but to persevere
He left it in thy power, ordain'd thy will
By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity;
Our voluntary service he requires,
Not our necessitated, such with him
Finds no acceptance, nor can find, for how
Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve
Willing or no, who will but what they must
By Destiny, and can no other choose?
Myself and all th'Angelick Host that stand
In sight of God enthron'd, our happy state
Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;
On other surety none; freely we serve,
Because we freely love, as in our will
To love or not; in this we stand or fall.

(IV, 524-540)

When Adam thanks Raphael for his instruction he remarks that the information is new to him: "... nor knew I not / To be both will and deed created free" (IV, 548-549). This short exchange serves to impress upon the reader that Adam is not only free but also now well aware of his freedom.

Even Satan confesses a consciousness of free will. His admission comes out during the crucial soliloquy at the beginning of Book IV. Here he acknowledges an awareness of his freedom and of his guilt and responsibility for his disobedience:

... other Powers as great
Fell not, but stand unshak'n, from within
Or from without, to all temptations arm'd.
Hadst thou the same free Will and Power to stand?
Thou hast: whom hast thou then or what to accuse,
But Heav'n's free Love dealt equally to all?

(IV, 63-8)

The mention here of temptations "from within or from without" alerts us to the corollary to the principle of free will. Temptation is necessarily a constant feature both in Heaven and on Earth in order that free will be valid. As we will see, temptation can arise internally as it did with Satan in his desire to be equal to God, and in
Adam and Eve who also experience yearning for higher status. External assaults of temptation may be classified as the malicious designs of Satan who makes use of the weakness in spirit and in physical perception of his victims.

**Satan and the Devils**

Satan of course is the first to succumb to temptation. It is significant that he initiates his own sin, "self-tempted, self-deprav'd" (III, 130). There are several versions of this event and it is through these various accounts that we arrive at a final conclusion about what actually occurred. These conflicting reports and varying styles of delivery also serve to characterize the speakers, a point that has been more thoroughly examined in the preceding chapter.

We begin in Book II with the comments of Satan and Beelzebub and the other devils. The overall tone of their version of the War in Heaven is one of outraged injury. God is conceived of as a tyrant who hid his forces and "tempted our attempt" (I, 642). They accuse God of concealing his powers, and by trickery and insidious weaponry (thunder) overthrowing a just popular rebellion. It is only through the commentary of the narrator and the subtle discrepancies in the devils' accusations that we have another perspective on the event.

The next account of the origin of Sin arises in the allegorical invention of the personified abstractions of Sin and Death. Sin's damning story conclusively convicts Satan of wilful sin through pride.
In Book III, the impassive voice of God delivers judgement on Satan. His argument stresses that Satan possesses free will notwithstanding God's own foreknowledge of the rebellion:

They themselves decreed
Thir own revolt, not I ... (III, 115, 116)
They themselves ordained
thir fall. (III, 128)

Satan next admits his own guilt and responsibility for Sin in the soliloquy early in Book IV. The significant lines have been quoted above.

The final account of the rebellion given by Raphael to Adam ties all of the preceding information together. The angel describes the events in chronological order and with the simplicity of a historical viewpoint. Though Satan is coldly denounced the account is objective, detailing actual facts and motive. Sound and sight images dominate the simple and straightforward language of the angel. Battles are evocatively described to help us both hear and see the horror of war in heaven.

If temptation is an everpresent element in Heaven and on Earth for angels and men, it also exists in Hell for Satan and the devils. If we view Satan's decline in this light it may be seen as the chronicle of further choices freely made by Satan himself. Each of these decisions leads him further into the spiritual underworld that he is thereby creating. As he freely acknowledges: "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (IV, 75).
On awakening in Hell, Satan and his followers have the choice of repenting or of continuing their campaign against God, by whatever means available. Any question of repentance is totally discouraged by the fallen Archangel. He does not hesitate over suggesting the most insidious form of revenge, the seduction of innocent man.

Each experience that he undergoes in his journey to earth presents him with another choice, for good or for evil. On seeing Sin and Death he is dismayed by their horrid appearance. Yet he freely chooses to join forces with them and later returns to greet them joyfully. In his soliloquy at Book IV, he admits his evil and confesses his sin, yet strengthens his identification with evil. The decision is quite wilfully made in the full recognition that it is his own wish to reject God's dominion.

In prospect of Eden and again later as he views the happy human couple, he is again faced with choices. He can obey his instinct towards Good, which still functions quite forcefully, and give up his schemes of corrupting man. But he chooses the evil alternative each time. Finally just before the climactic scene with Eve, he is momentarily stunned by the effects of her beauty as he sees her wandering in the garden. However, his evil converts this first positive response into envy and malice. He again reaffirms his resolve to bring destruction to Adam and Eve.
Just as we can map Satan's degeneration through the series of temptations that confront him we find that the fallen angels are also given the opportunities for choice. Their primary temptation is the initial rebellion in Heaven. Abdiel's refusal to accept Satan's arguments and his stand for God remain as dramatic evidence that the fallen angels freely willed their disobedience however seductive Satan's inducements may have been. Having made this one fatal choice, the devils now proceed in a decline similar to Satan's. In Hell, they rally to his side and thereafter support his evil designs against man. As with Satan, each choice is freely made and always made for evil.

Ad a m a n d E v e

Raphael tells Adam, "God made thee perfet, not immutable" (V, 524), and so Man must continually experience trials of his love for and obedience to God. Thus we find that Adam and Eve encounter a series of temptations long before the final temptation of the forbidden fruit. In an episode that recalls for us the situation of the Lady in Comus beset by fearful fancies in the wood, Eve is disturbed by the effect of the dream that Satan concocts to undermine her will. Through the device of this dream Milton displays man's vulnerability to his imperfect perceptions. Significantly eye and ear imagery is employed to reveal the weaknesses in our sensuous faculties. And, we note that Satan introduces Temptation to Eve through her "ear"; he sits,
Squat like a Toad, close at the ear of Eve;  
Assaying by his Devilish art to reach  
The Organs of her Fancy, and with them forge  
Illusions as he list, Phantasms and Dreams.  
(IV, 800-803)

Eve wakes with "startl'd eye" (V, 26), her spiritual confusion  
apparent in her dishevelled appearance and her distracted frame of  
mind. Adam soothes her fears and elaborates on the nature of dreams and  
fancies. He maintains that to be tempted is not to sin:

Evil into the mind of God or Man  
May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave  
No spot or blame behind: Which gives me hope  
That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream  
Waking thou never wilt consent to do.  
(V, 117-121)

Through the manipulation of her senses, Eve's actual temptation is  
rehearsed, but Milton carefully establishes that she has neither sinned  
nor been weakened by this trial: "So all was clear'd, and to the  
Field they haste" (V, 136).

Not only man but the angels are open to deceptions of this  
kind. We recall the scene where Uriel is persuaded to give information  
and directions to the disguised Satan. Only God can distinguish  
the hypocrisy of evil (III, 68ff). Since only God has perfect vision  
and knowledge, all of his creatures, even the angels, are capable of  
being deceived.

Adam also undergoes several temptations before the temptation  
of the fruit. Along with Eve he is shocked by the account of the  
rebellion of the angels. Even to hear of Satan's evil constitutes a  
temptation, one that they both successfully surmount:
He with his consorted Eve
The story heard attentive, and was fill'd
With admiration, and deep muse to hear
Of things so high and strange, things to thir thought
So unimaginable, as hate in Heav'n,
And War so near the Peace of God in bliss
With such confusion: but the evil soon
Driv'n back redounded as a flood on those
From whom it sprung, impossible to mix
With Blessedness. Whence Adam soon repeal'd
The doubts that in his heart arose: and now
Led on, yet sinless

(VII, 50-61)

Having heard of the rebellion in Hell, Adam is anxious to learn more of God and creation. Raphael counsels temperance in the desire for such knowledge (VII, 120 ff), then proceeds to describe the creation of the world, and of Adam himself. Adam is excited by these revelations and responds with a flood of questions. Raphael tries again to restrain Adam's enthusiasm, explaining that both Man and Angels are given only partial knowledge commensurate with their abilities to comprehend. He ends with this counsel:

Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;
Of other Creatures, as him pleases best,
Wherever plac't, let him dispose: joy thou
In what he gives to thee, this Paradise
And thy fair Eve: Heav'n is for thee too high
To know what passes there; he lowly wise:
Think only what concerns thee and thy being;
Dream not of other Worlds, what Creatures there
Live, in what state, condition or degree,
Contented that thus far hath been reveal'd
Not of Earth only but of highest Heav'n.

(VIII, 167-178)

Raphael's argument convinces Adam and he ceases his fruitless quest for what he need not know. He is "clear'd of doubt" (VIII, 179). Thus the temptation to possess more knowledge than is needful is, like
the first temptation occasioned by Satan's story, successfully passed.
Inherent in these trials are elements of the final temptation to which
he will succumb -- the desire to be as a god, which is Satan's sin,
and the longing to know more than he should.

In the meantime Adam also is alerted to the weakness that
will be his major temptation. He himself reveals this vulnerability
during his account to Raphael concerning his origins. In praising the
beauty and loveliness of Eve, he confesses his feeling of subjection
to her. Raphael reprimands him, warning him of the danger of being
a slave to Eve's charms. Adam insists that he loves only the good
that is embodied in Eve and thereby is not capable of abandoning his
rightful duty.

I to thee disclose
What inward thence I feel, not therefore foil'd,
Who meet with various objects, from the sense
Variously representing; yet still free
Approve the best, and follow what I approve.
(VIII, 607-611)

Like Eve, Adam has been specifically forewarned of the nature of his
forthcoming temptation. Yet he too, emerges from his preliminary
trials free and sinless.

The final temptations of Adam and Eve are masterpieces of
poetic skill. It is here that the sight and sound imagery is
exploited to the full. Each verse passage is punctuated with repeti-
tive phrases stressing the impact of the temptation through the eye
and ear.

Eve's temptation begins with the approach of the serpent.
His physical beauty is fascinating and his movements are peculiarly
calculated to attract her eye:

pleasing was his shape,
And lovely, never since of serpent kind
Loveller...
... his tortuous Train
Curl'd many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve
To lure her eye.

(IX, 503-518)

Eve appears unconcerned with this display and so he adopts a pose of humble adoration: "His gentle dumb expression turn'd at length /
The Eye of Eve to mark his play" (IX, 527-528). Having captured her attention he unleashes his rhetorical powers. He begins with heavy flattery, complaining that Eve's beauty lacks an appreciative audience. Eve ignores these words, for she is totally amazed at the fact of the serpent's speaking. She asks how he gained this faculty.

Satan's explanation leads her to wish to see the special tree that he says granted him a voice. However at this point we note that she mentions the "overpraising" of the serpent. Her critical judgement, though numbed, is still operational.

The dialogue between Eve and Satan reflects the character of the participants. Satan's guile and deceit are made explicit in his twisting phrases and overblown flattery. In contrast Eve's simple forthright responses illustrate her, as yet, innocent goodness.

Satan's final speech is a skillfully produced argument that undermines Eve's trust in God and clouds the issue of sin so successfully that she can begin to consider disobedience. Underlying all of the spurious intellectual reasoning is the appeal to her vanity and the desire to be as a god. A metaphor built around the paradoxical
meanings of eyes and vision is also introduced in this passage. This
imagery is interplayed throughout the fall and its aftermath.

Satan promises:

... in the day
Ye eat thereof, your Eyes that seem so clear,
Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then
Op'n'd and clear'd, and ye shall be as Gods
Knowing both Good and Evil as they know.

(IX, 705-709)

As Eve muses over his words (that "ring" persuasively in her
ears), the visual attraction of the fruit itself combines with her
natural noontime hunger to assault her senses. We note that both
Eve and later, Adam, are tempted by the special attractiveness of the
fruit itself:

He ended, and his words replete with guile
Into her heart too easy entrance won:
Fixt on the Fruit she gaz'd, which to behold
Might tempt alone, and in her ears the sound
Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregn'd
With Reason, to her seeming and with Truth;
Meanwhile the hour of Noon drew on, and wak'd
An eager appetite, rais'd by the smell
So savory of that Fruit, which with desire,
Inclivable now grown to touch or taste,
Solicited her longing eye.

(IX, 733-743)

Eve's speech prior to the act of eating the forbidden fruit
wherein the physical act of sin occurs is of particular interest. Here
she falls into complex rationalization of her wilful decision to dis-
obeys God. In actual fact, her words announce that she has already fallen
for the reasoning of her argument is twisted and obscured as she
convinces herself to ignore God's command. Having sinned in thought
and will, she performs the actual deed and eats the fruit.
The speeches of Eve immediately after the fall are cleverly designed to contrast with her unfallen condition. Her language becomes florid and calculating as a reflection of both the physical and psychological effects of her fall. In idolatrous pagan passion she falls to her knees and worships the fatal tree. Her devotions stand in ironic contrast to the beautiful chaste language of the hymns to God made earlier.

The crowning evidence of her fall is in the new duplicity in her relations with Adam. Gone is the simple acceptance of her place in the hierarchy happily subject to Adam’s tender rule. She questions whether she should allow Adam to taste of the fruit or remain herself sole possessor of the power of knowledge. Never before has she calculated her actions. No longer does she act with the spontaneity and freedom of innocence. Her decision to tell Adam about the fruit is finally reached out of fear that a new Eve will supplant her if indeed she should die. However, she concludes her argument, much as Satan habitually does, by pleading a higher motive for a base action: “So dear I love him; that with him all deaths / I could endure, without him live no life” (IX, 832, 883).

The reader is given no respite to recover from the emotional shock of Eve’s fall and her sad transformation. Adam approaches bearing the garland of flowers and Eve hurries to meet him bringing her gift, the beautiful but deadly fruit. It is a scene of striking visual impact. The sight and sound images assert themselves in the crucial passages that follow as Adam makes his decision.
The narrative voice's introduction to Eve's first speech to Adam describes the duplicity of her appearance and words:

To him she hasted, in her face excuse
Came Prologue, and Apology to prompt,
Which with bland words at will she thus addrest.

(IX, 853-855)

The speech itself picks up the metaphor of vision which permeates the temptation episode. She tells Adam that the fruit possesses "Divine effect / To open Eyes" (IX, 866). She uses all her persuasive Satanic rhetoric to convince Adam to join her in sin. The concluding comment made by the narrative voice again dwells on Eve's telltale appearance: "Thus Eve with Countenance blithe her story told" (IX, 886). Her fallen state is physically evident: "in her Cheek distemper flushing glow'd" (IX, 887).

Adam possesses the "clear eye" of the virtuous soul and immediately perceives that she is fallen. His agitation is such that he is transfixed with horror and is rendered speechless, physical indications of his spiritual upheaval:

Adam, soon as he heard
The fatal Trespass done by Eve, amaz'd,
Astonied stood and Blank, while horror chill
Ran through his veins, and all his joints relax'd.

(IX, 888-891)

His decision to join Eve in sin is made quickly without elaborate consideration. Adam's sin is a wilful decision to disregard God's ordinance and it is made by an Adam who completely understands what he is doing:
some cursed fraud
Of Enemy hath beguil'd thee, yet unknown,
And mee with thee hath ruin'd, for with thee
Certain my resolution is to Die.

(IX, 904-907)

As persuasive as Eve's words may seem Adam is not deceived and her eloquent sales appeal seems of little concern to him.

Once Adam has chosen to sin he engages in the intricate reasoning process that characterized Eve's fall. His pride and desire to know more and to be as a God assert themselves. His language loses its straightforward clarity and falls into the rationalization of the fallen mind. Eve joyfully encourages Adam in his decision. Among the benefits of eating the fruit she lists is "op'n'd Eyes"

(IX, 985).

Having gorged intemperately on the false fruit the hapless pair experience intoxication. Immediately additional evidence of their fallen condition appears. Lust replaces their formerly chaste love. Significantly this lust is expressed in their eyes:

hee on Eve
Began to cast lascivious Eyes, she him
As wantonly repaid; in Lust they burn:
Till Adam thus 'gan Eve to' dalliance move.

(IX, 1013-1016)

Eve's "Eye" daint contagion Fire"(IX, 1036). Throughout the poem eyes that "burn" denote the restless unsatisfied mental state of evil. This use of the image arises several times, as Mr. Rajan has noted.

Upon awakening from their troubled sleep, Adam and Eve experience deep disillusionment. Here Milton again relies on ear and
eye imagery to contrast the situation of the fallen Adam and Eve with the bliss of their former unfallen happiness. Now in seeing one another, they "soon found thir Eyes how op'n'd" (IX, 1053). This ironic echo recalls the words of both Satan and later Eve as they extolled the virtue of the fruit to "open eyes". Never before have either Adam or Eve expressed anything but joy at the sight of one another. Now they are suddenly uncomfortably aware of their nakedness. As the enormity of their sin permeates their consciousness they sit "silent, and in face / Confounded ... as struck'n mute" (IX, 1063-1064).

When Adam is finally able to rouse himself to speech his words are replete with the recurrent eye and ear images:

O Eve, in evil hour thou did'st give ear
To that false Worm, of whomsoever taught
To counterfeit Man's voice, true in our Fall,
False in our promis'd Rising; since our Eyes
Op'n'd we find indeed, and find we know
Both Good and Evil, Good lost, and Evil got.
(IX, 1067-1072)

He is ashamed and aware that their guilt is apparent: "in our Faces evident the signs / Of foul concupiscence" (IX, 1077-1078). He is afraid to face God or his ministers, the angels, for he fears that his sin would be evident. And so he and Eve retire to hide in the wood. There they end in "mutual accusation" (IX, 1187). Their bitter exchanges provide a direct contrast to the sonorous harmony and affectionate dignity of their previous addresses to one another.

Each of the details describing the appearance and speech of the sinful pair relates back to aspects of the characterization of
the unfallen Adam and Eve. The clarity of their vision is distorted. The realization of their evil completely destroys their former spontaneous joy in each other and creation. The beautiful simplicity of their innocent speech is reduced to squabbling; their words are full of Satanic egoism, deception, rationalization and discord.

However, the fallen couple have been given the opportunity for repentance and return to God. And so they do not remain in the limbo of their embittered animosity. They are released from their misery by Michael's visit.

The transition from despair to radiant joy in the knowledge of salvation is effectively conveyed through sight and sound imagery. The concept of vision built around the metaphor "to open eyes" is the foundation for the final two books. God instructs Michael to visit Adam with a vision of the future of mankind and thus:

... to nobler sights
Michael from Adam's eyes the film remov'd
Which that false Fruit that promis'd clearer sight
Had bred; then purg'd with Euphrasy and Rue
The visual Nerve, for he had much to see.
(XI, 411-415)

The visual image links the following historical panorama that Michael unveils for Adam: "Adam, now ope thine eyes ..." (XI, 423); "His eyes he op'n'd ..." (XI, 429). Adam begins to learn from Michael's tutoring, and responds thankfully: "True opener of mine eyes, prime angel blest" (XI, 518); "Now first I find / Mine eyes true op'n'ing, and my heart much eased" (XII, 273-274).

After these revelations of God's forgiveness and mercy, Adam arrives at a peaceful acceptance of his lot and ends by expressing
the paradox of the fortunate fall:

O goodness infinite, goodness immense
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good.
(XII, 469-471)

In Adam's joyful admiration of God's goodness we find a return to his former simple eloquence. His words are reminiscent of the spontaneous hymns of praise offered to God in the garden before the fall. There is however an underlying note of elegy here that reflects the effects of the fall.

The Interpretative Role of The Imagery

In the consideration of the temptations scenes as in the study of other aspects of the poem the characteristic use of the network of sound and sight images remains as a solid touchstone of authority for questions of interpretation. To forget the role of the images is to risk the possibility of misreading the temptation scenes. For example, this suggested exoneration of Eve by Daiches appears to imply Eve's own clouded reasoning:

If she had known more Eve would have been more suspicious of this plausible eloquence; but she could not know more without eating of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge; and so the paradox is emphasized. Her sin was disobedience, it is true; but what caused her to commit that sin was credulity. She was taken in by cunning lies, never having met with lies or cunning before.

Is credulity sinful and suspicion a virtue? It is the problem of Othello's trusting Iago. There is no solution; only a moral paradox at the heart of the matter.
Mr. Daiches' sympathy for Eve is commendable. But to acquit her on the grounds that her temptation is "a moral paradox" without solution forgets her own words. In the lines before her fall she clearly reveals that her sin is definitely not credulity but the sin of pride, the desire to know and be more than she should. Eve is indeed credulous but culpably so. She wilfully chooses to accept the serpent's story. She wants to believe him because she desperately wants the power associated with knowledge.

The further argument that Eve is incapable of judgment as she does not possess the ability to deal with Satan, directly contradicts the continued assertion of the poem that man is "sufficient to have stood". It also conveniently overlooks the earlier damning remark made by Eve that correctly distinguishes the Serpent's words as "over praising". Her true ear did not fail her -- she chose to disregard it.

It is a tribute to Milton's art that he succeeds in provoking controversy on the question of Eve's responsibility for her action. He deliberately invokes our sympathy for Eve and thereby involves us in her sin. Later, Adam's temptation will also become our own. Stanley Fish sees this episode as the climactic point of what he terms "the reader's education". The reader's judgement of Adam's decision will reflect his own spiritual state and measure just how much he has learned from the poem:

This is the terminal point of the reader's education, the trial to which he will be adequate only if he has succeeded in recovering the vision Adam now proceeds
to shatter. The specific act he is asked to perform is literary, simply the determination of meaning; but by deciding, as he has had to decide before, exactly what the poem means, he decides between the philosophical and moral alternatives mirrored in the interpretative possibilities (Adam is right, Adam is wrong), and in this instance these possibilities embrace the full range of contraries whose differentiation has been his concern in the body of the poem -- true and false heroism, true love and love of self, freedom and licence, in sum, union with divinity and therefore with everything of value, or thralldom to the false values created by a distorting perspective.  

Whatever may be the reader's feelings about Adam's decision Milton has clearly presented his position. Though we are emotionally drawn to Adam in his plight, the ear and eye imagery combine to convict Adam of wilful disobedience.

The foregoing discussion has presented the theme of temptation in the light of Milton's use of sound and sight imagery. The dramatic benefits of employing such references are important, of course, but it is in rendering the deep psychological overtones involved in the processes of temptation and its aftereffects that the ear-and-eye imagery proves most effective. When we consider the further duty of interpreting elusive passages, it is apparent that the imagery plays a significant role in portraying temptation.
FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER III)

1 Rajan, *The Lofty Rhyme*, p. 73.


3 Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, pp. 271, 272.
CHAPTER IV

PARADISE REGAINED

Paradise Regained and Paradise Lost though centered around the primary theme of temptation are of a distinctly different nature. In the brief epic, the dramatic devices, scope of theme and poetic style of Paradise Lost are all restricted and reshaped in sober simplicity. As Merritt Hughes explains in his introduction to the poem: "The subject forbade dramatization of the style and the lyric passion had to be contained in the even spare language of Christ's denials and rebukes of Satan." 1

One of the major differences in the two poems arises out of the fact that Paradise Lost is less confined to a definite account from the Bible than is Paradise Regained. Milton's grand epic is based loosely upon the traditional story of creation and temptation. The early accounts in the Old Testament are very brief and indeed more concerned with spiritual truth than historical fact. They are lyrical and emotional as befits an attempt to convey the mysteries of war in Heaven and original sin to men who cannot comprehend such wonders intellectually. The absence of fact admits the generous amplifications that Milton accomplishes with such consummate skill.

In contrast, the story of Christ's encounter with the devil and His trials in the desert is recounted in no less than three versions in the New Testament. Though the gospels differ slightly, they are rich in detail and define the scope of the story. Christ's existence and
experiences are well within recorded human history and therefore Milton must accept the limitations of a historical viewpoint. As Grace comments: "Inventiveness on the part of the poet is less open to resentment in a poetic statement than in a historical account."²

The style of Paradise Regained also gives evidence of the influence of the biblical sources. Since Milton's account of the temptations follows the gospels so closely, he consciously employs the familiar images and diction. Nevertheless, despite the greater restrictions imposed by the choice of his subject matter and genre, Milton's characteristic poetic techniques can be distinguished. In portraying character and in his methods of contrasting and comparing the qualities of evil and good, eye and ear imagery assumes a significant role.

**BOOK I**

We are immediately aware in the first few lines of the invocation of Paradise Regained of a contrast with Paradise Lost. The metaphor of the inspired singer appears as we would expect in an epic, but here the tone is much more formal and traditional than in the Invocation to Book I of Paradise Lost. Then the action of the poem begins with John the Baptist's recognition and baptism of Christ. The Baptist's role as proclaimer is the basis for a very effective reference to the power of language:

Now had the great Proclaimer with a voice More awful than the sound of Trumpet, cried Repentance, and Heaven's Kingdom nigh at hand To all Baptiz'd.

(I, 18-21)
As a possessor of a "true eye" by reason of his virtue, John recognizes Christ as the Saviour it his duty to announce (I, 25, 26). Satan is a witness to God's acknowledgment of Jesus as His son. On hearing the divine voice commend Jesus he suffers as if wounded: "... with the voice divine / Nigh Thunderstruck..." (I, 35, 36). This suggestion that a voice can act with the force of a weapon recalls the war in Heaven and the extensive use in *Paradise Lost* of the network of metaphors that invests words and language with extraordinary powers.

As in his response to Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Satan is spell-bound at the sight of virtue as embodied by Christ. However, as always, reaction sets in and there is the habitual emergence of malice and anger. He returns to "mid air" to call a council to plot his battle strategy against this new enemy.

In the account of the ensuing meeting with his devilish supporters, traces of descriptive methods employed in *Paradise Lost* emerge. For example, Satan's physical appearance and demeanour illustrate his state of mind. The narrative voice introduces his address with this comment: "With looks, aghast and sad he thus bespoke " (I, 43). The council itself is described as being "within thick Clouds and dark tenfold involv'd, / A gloomy Consistory" (I, 41, 42), effective imagery to imply the pervasive nature of their evil.

While outlining the threat to his influence on earth, Satan describes Jesus in the following terms: "for man he seems / In all his lineaments, though in his face / The glimpses of his Father's glory shine" (I, 91-93). Here again Satan admits his attraction to virtue.
The effect of Satan's speech on his listeners is skillfully conveyed by employing an image reflecting the power of words:

He ended, and his words impression left
Of much amazement to the Infernal Crew.
Distracted and surprised with deep dismay
At these sad tidings.

(I, 106-109)

As capable as ever of swaying his followers by his words, Satan succeeds in getting support for his mission to tempt Christ.

The scene shifts to heaven and God who is overlooking these events. He is described in traditional terms of brightness and as a Voice. God is "... the most High, who in full frequency bright / Of Angels, thus to Gabriel smiling spake" (I, 128-129). He foretells the victory of Christ over Sin and Death. After these revelations the angels praise God, their angelic goodness manifested through their hymns.

Finally, after the stage has been set, the point in history established, and God's position and Satan's made known, we meet the hero of the poem. In the first encounter with Christ we overhear an interior monologue as he muses over his destiny. As usual in Milton's work, the task of conveying character is entrusted to the sound and sight images. The fundamental metaphor is language. Christ's very words reflect his spiritual qualities. His meekness, goodness, faith and steadfast obedience to God's will are all exemplified in the simple clarity of his speech.

In assessing his role and purpose on earth Jesus comes to the conclusion that he will reject the use of force and violence to accomplish his task. He will rely on his words to convince men. The
power of language is expressed in the following lines:

Yet held it more humane, more heavenly, first
By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
And make persuasion do the work of fear;
At least to try, and teach the erring Soul
Not wilfully misdoing, but unaware
Misled: the stubborn only to subdue.
(I, 221-226)

In the forthcoming debates with Satan, we will see the "winning words" at work and witness Christ's attempts to "try, and teach the erring Soul" of his adversary. As Satan tempts Jesus he himself will also be tempted. In the encounters with Christ's virtue he is given further opportunity to repent although there is no suggestion that this is a real possibility. Satan as the "Author of all ill" is wilfully evil and beyond reach, the prototype of "the erring Soul . . . wilfully misdoing".

Christ makes his way to the desert to undergo the physical and spiritual testing that will instruct him in his Father's way. Alone and without food or shelter he wanders for forty days.

Satan accosts him and begins to test him. As in Eve's temptation he assumes a disguise that would suggest innocence and credibility. Affecting rustic simplicity, he tries to convince Christ to change the stones to bread. Jesus refuses, revealing not only that he recognizes Satan through his disguise but that he realizes the implications of Satan's temptation. Christ possesses the "true ear" as well as the "clear eye" of virtue. Mr. Daiches' comment on this exchange provides some interesting insight into the dynamics of the forthcoming debate:

Christ's calm refusal to do anything which might suggest distrust of God produces a change in Satan's
style, which becomes steadily more persuasive and more rhetorical. That rhetoric, the art of persuasion, is here on the side of evil is abundantly clear. Christ's language is quiet, precise, even homely, the language of private, not public, discussion.

The more Christ remains aloof from his blandishments the more Satan will respond with persuasive eloquence (although frustration will cause momentary lapses in his geniality). And so Satan does not lose his presence of mind when he is discovered but swiftly alters his method of attack. He commences a moving appeal for pity, insisting that although he is evil he is nevertheless attracted by good:

Though I have lost
Much luster of my native brightness, lost
To be belov'd of God, I have not lost;
To love, at least contemplate and admire
What I see excellent in good, or fair,
Or virtuous.

(1, 377-382)

Indeed, as with all of what Satan says, this assertion holds some element of truth. This Satan, like the Satan of Paradise Lost and Comus, does have a weakness for beauty and goodness. However, Christ is not deceived by this overt attempt at flattery. He deals with Satan's arguments one by one, concluding with the assertion that he himself is the new Oracle that will displace the false oracles of Satanic inspiration. The false word will be defeated by the truth and evil shall be silenced. This passage is based upon the biblical image that identifies Christ as the word of God, and culminates with Christ's assertion that he is the "living Oracle".

God hath now sent his living Oracle
Into the World to teach his final will,
And sends his Spirit of Truth henceforth to dwell
In pious Hearts, an inward Oracle
To all truth requisite for men to know.

Satan though angered by his lack of success conceals his emotion
and retorts with further rhetoric. He contrives to mask his specious
reasoning by elaborate ear and voice imagery.

Hark are the ways of truth, and rough to walk,
Smooth on the tongue discours'd, pleasing to th' ear,
And tunable as Silvan Pipe or Song;
What wonder then if I delight to hear
Her dictates from thy mouth?

Christ ignores this attempt at flattery and Satan must eke out
some vestiges of success by getting permission to visit Christ again.
It is an empty victory for the reply is a noncommittal reminder that
Satan can only do what God allows him to do. This brief response is
cleverly introduced by a description of Christ's expression. The refer-
ence to an "unaltered brow" (I, 493) clearly tells us that Satan's
temptation has been fruitless. That Christ has sustained his virtue
throughout these assaults is evidenced not only by his unruffled
appearance but also by his continued use of the flat, unemotional and
simple speech that he has employed throughout.

In this first book the pattern for the unravelling of the tempt-
ation story has been established. We have noted the close adherence
to the gospel sources and a reliance on the familiar biblical phrases
and imagery. The main metaphor of the poem revolves around language--
true and false speech. Christ's eloquent simplicity is contrasted with
the suave duplicity of Satan.

However, the reader remembering the Satan of *Paradise Lost*
will have wondered at the fact that Satan's rhetoric never approaches the heights of the temptation of Eve. Mrs. Lewalski offers a two-fold explanation for this departure from Satan's characteristic style. First, she suggests that decorum demands that Satan's style be dampened somewhat from his performance in *Paradise Lost*. Her second and more convincing argument praises the subtlety of Milton's psychology:

His [Satan's] very different manner and style of address in the brief epic results not so much from his continued decline and degeneration after his sin (though this is a factor) but primarily from the fact that Satan is too intelligent a rhetorician not to adapt his tactics to the very different circumstances which he here meets.

**BOOK II**

Book II begins with a brief surveillance of activities on earth and in mid air where Satan meets with the devils. The change in scene provides a calculated break from the tension of the temptation situation. First, we glimpse the very human and real predicament of the disciples bereft of their leader. This speech is carefully orchestrated to suggest a series of voices, a chorus of opinion, that relates the progress of Jesus' followers from despair to faith. Visual and aural imagery that consciously echoes biblical phraseology contributes to the effectiveness of the passage. The following excerpts illustrate the point:

Our eyes beheld
Messiah certainly now come, so long
Expected of our Fathers; we have heard
His words, his wisdom full of grace and truth.

*(II, 31-34)*
He will not fail.
Nor will withdraw him now, nor will recall,
Mock us with his blest sight, then snatch him hence;
Soon we shall see our hope, our joy return.
(II, 54-57)

Following this brief glimpse of the disciples we are next allowed

to overhear Mary as she ponders the mystery of her marvellous son.
The outlines of Jesus' birth and early life are swiftly recounted as
Mary pieces the evidence together towards her realization of Christ's
mission on earth.

Leaving Mary, the narrative voice reminds us that Christ's
ordeal continues in the desert before focusing our attention on Satan
and his followers. Satan has returned to mid air to gather his forces
and elicit possible suggestions for more successful methods to win
over Christ. That he has encountered his match is apparent through
his attitude and demeanour while addressing his supporters:

There without sign of boast, or sign of joy,
Solicitous and blank he thus began.
(II, 119, 120)

Despite the absence of his former fire, the tenor of his speech
is calculated to mobilize his supporters. He rightly views Christ as
his "Enemy", but the suggestion of impending invasion is totally
spurious. Ironically, Satan will be proven correct for he will indeed
fall again to Hell.

such an Enemy
Is ris'n to invade us, who no less
Threat'ns than our expulsion down to Hell.
(II, 126-128)

His innate attraction to virtue is exposed in this unconscious tribute
to Christ's perfection:
If he be 'Man by Mother's side at least.
With more than human gifts from Heav'n adorn'd,
Perfections absolute, Graces divine,
And amplitude of mind to greatest Deeds.

(II, 136-139)

Although Satan's style in this address is muted and he seems quite honest and straightforward, we sense his duplicity. For example, when he humbly admits the possibility of failure (II, 140-146), we have the certain impression that his underlying motive for this confession is to avoid future blame.

The devils respond to Satan's words with their characteristic "clamor", a detail that conveys their mindless acquiescence in evil. Though there is no suggestion that the devils are being tempted, for they are so immersed in evil that they are beyond temptation, another opportunity for choice is in fact being given them. Belial's foolish idea of supplying beautiful women to corrupt Christ's virtue is swiftly rejected by Satan. As in Paradise Lost, Satan here gives evidence that he is fully aware of the nature of virtue; he recognizes that Christ will not be taken in by mere appearance. The metaphorical implications of vision are played upon here to compare inward and outward beauty.

Having received no inspiration from the councillors, Satan resumes plotting himself. He concludes that he will assay Christ with the temptations "of worth of honor, glory and popular praise" (II, 227). Again his supporters respond noisily to signal their agreement to this plan: "He ceas'd and heard thir grant in loud acclaim" (II, 235).

As we return to Christ in the desert, an interesting dream episode occurs. Appetite causes Christ to dream that he is eating but
the dream reveals that Christ has as much a desire for spiritual nourishment as physical. He imagines that he dines with Elijah and Daniel. On awakening he is still hungry but there is no mention made that this fact perturbs him.

At this point Satan reappears before Christ dressed in courtly dress. The change in appearance corresponds with his new role. He adopts a manner of urbanity and sophistication. He questions Christ about his continued fast and develops a very plausible rationalization to absolve Christ from responsibility in partaking of the food he proffers. Jesus inserts two brief negative comments that heighten our awareness of Satan's effusive rhetoric. Following the prolonged description of the banquet, Satan climaxes his persuasive argument (much as Comus does in trying to convince the Lady) by assuring Christ that what he offers is not forbidden by God and by implying that his refusal is an insult to God's bounty (II, 368-377).

Jesus replies "temperately" (II, 378) to this appeal to natural hunger and appetite. The tone of his speech embodies the concept of temperance in its calm, rational refusal. Satan is "malcontent" (II, 392) in the face of Christ's steadfast righteousness. Exasperated, he whisks the banquet away. Momentarily, he loses his aura of suave sophistication and perversely berates Christ:

That I have also power to give thou seest;  
If of that pow'r I bring thee voluntary  
What I might have bestow'd on whom I pleas'd,  
And rather opportunely in this place  
Chose to impart to thy apparent need,  
Why shouldst thou not accept it? but I see  
What I can do or offer is suspect;
Of these things others quickly will dispose
Whose pains have earn'd the far-fet spoil.
(II, 393-401)

However, he regains his equanimity and proceeds to yet another temptation—this time of Wealth. Jesus replies "patiently" (II, 432) to this new enticement and proceeds in his clear didactic style to confound the argument of his tempter.

The device of characterizing the tone of the speech as the alternating speakers are introduced that we have seen above becomes the basic technique for presenting the debate through the rest of the poem. The repetitive nature of this formula tends to lend a stilted effect to the poem. But these interruptions by the narrative voice also provide a continuous assessment of the emotional state of the speakers. This is a war of words and the Voice's comments record the results of each battle.

The long, beautifully simple speech that concludes Book II illustrates the wisdom and spiritual perspective that Christ's wandering and fasting in the desert has granted him. The trying of his capacities by Satan tests these new resources of inner strength. This eloquent refusal of the temptation of wealth is a fitting end to the second Book.

BOOK III

The third book continues the dramatic conflict of the temptation. It begins with a characteristically Miltonic description of Satan's reaction to Christ's words. We see Satan's confusion and dismay. He stands "as mute" (III, 2), unable to respond. Finally, he gathers up
his weapons, his "soothing words" (III, 6), and prepares to do battle
again.

Later, as Christ rejects the temptation of fame and glory, Satan
again evinces physical indications of his spiritual upheaval:

... and here again
Satan had not to answer, but stood struck
With guilt of his own sin, for he himself
Insatiable of glory had lost all.

(III, 145-148)

Another type of visual metaphor that we recognize from Comus
and Paradise Lost is the portrayal of evil's distorted viewpoint. The
sight of the massed armies of Parthia encourages Satan to extoll the
value of power. The incident particularly recalls Paradise Lost, Book I,
when the awakened devils resume ranks before their leader. The sight
of his legions gathered before him reaffirms Satan's pride in his
strength and his power. During each of these episodes, he displays his
intoxication at the visible manifestation of physical force. In Hell
he forgets that his followers have just been irrevocably defeated in
Heaven. Here, Christ must point out the futility of earthly nationalistic
struggles. In doing so, he succinctly describes for us Satan's methods
of persuasion -- assault through eye and ear:

Much ostentation vain of fleshly arm
And fragile arms, much instrument of war
Long in preparing, soon to nothing brought,
Before mine eyes thou hast set; and in my ear
Vented much policy, and projects deep
Of enemies, of aids, battles and leagues,
Plausible to the world, to mee worth naught,

(III, 387-393)

Throughout this book and the next there is a focus on the
dialogue of the adversaries. As we have seen earlier, speeches are
often introduced by a comment of the narrative voice that indicates the tone of the speaker and his emotional state. As the poem concentrates on the conflict and Satan's temptations become more desperate the device becomes even more formalized than in Book II. The following examples illustrate this point: "To whom our Savior calmly thus replied" (III, 43); "To whom the Tempter murmuring thus replied" (III, 108); "To whom our Savior fervently replied" (III, 121); "To whom the Tempter angrily railed replied" (III, 203). These lines serve to link the speeches and as mentioned above perform the additional service of indicating the course of the battle.

The discursive nature of the dialogue does much to conceal the desperate quality of this confrontation. When we remember that Satan and Christ are in fact mortal enemies in deadly combat, the civilized protocol of their argument only serves to heighten the tension.

The end of the third book parallels that of the second as Christ delivers a final denunciation of worldly power. He is totally unmoved by the sophisticated urbanity of Satan and rejects his inducements clearly and finally.

BOOK IV

The fourth book like the third begins by focusing on the confusion of the unsuccessful tempter. Again, Satan's discomfiture is physically evident. He has been "silenced":

Perplex'd and troubl'd at his bad success
The Tempter stood, nor had what to reply
Discover'd in his fraud, thrown from his hope,
A Satan without words is indeed a sorry sight. Milton's characteristic identification of evil with rhetoric admits the forceful use of such phrases as "to shameful silence brought" (IV, 22). Such a remark in normal context would appear to be of little consequence; here, it records the enormity of Satan's distress.

Although he has again been severely routed, Satan is not lacking in determination. He brings Christ to the other side of the mountain where he breaks his silence (IV, 43) to offer Christ yet another kingdom, Rome. Despite the convincing argument and the magnificent panorama of Rome's glory, Christ is again "unmov'd" (IV, 109). He refuses the visual enticement of power -- in deliberate contrast to Satan:

Nor doth this grandeur and majestic show
Of luxury, though call'd magnificence,
More than of arms before, allure mine eye,
Much less my mind. (IV, 110-113)

Satan is excessively irritated by Christ's steadfast refusal to succumb to any of his proposals. In frustration, he tempts Christ with the promise of dominion over all the kingdoms of the world. However, this final offer is accompanied, by a stipulation. Christ must acknowledge him and honour him. This condition has, of course, been an underlying aspect of all the previous temptations. Satan has made the sin concrete by voicing it.

Christ rejects the sin and concludes by naming Satan:
Get thee behind me; plain thou now appear'st
That Evil one, Satan for ever damn'd.
(IV, 193-194)

The metaphorical implications of language are effectively utilized in
this crucial exchange. The identification of the enemy emerges as the
crux of the conflict. Although both Satan and Christ have indicated
previously some degree of mutual recognition, the actual naming of the
adversary at the end of the dispute is given great significance.

Following this direct confrontation, Satan retaliates with a
more subtle temptation, the temptation of learning. In this passage
the contrast in styles of language between the tempter and his victim
is wonderfully appropriate. Satan gives an impressive and eloquent
catalogue of the world's creative accomplishments and assures Christ
that such learning will "render thee a King complete / Within thyself,
much more with Empire join'd" (IV, 283-284). Christ responds with a
clear, precise and rational rejection of worldly wisdom. He concludes
that knowledge of God's truth is sufficient to equip a man to be a king.
That he himself does in fact possess such knowledge and wisdom is
demonstrated by the critical skill with which he exposes the pretensions
of the various schools of learning. After this encounter, Christ lies
down to rest.

Satan who possesses no scruples and is ever ready to assault
his victim however defenseless, causes Christ's sleep to be disturbed
by nightmare and later, cataclysmic storm. Unlike Eve, Christ emerges
untouched by this invasion of the subconscious. He is further completely
unruffled by Satan's interpretation of the storm as a portent of evil
to come. He brusquely denounces Satan and sarcastically dismisses his terror tactics: "Mee worse than wet thou find' st not...." (IV, 486). He repeats the damming identification of Satan:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{desist, thou art discern'd} \\
\text{And toil'st in vain, nor me in vain molest.}
\end{align*}
\]

(IV, 497-498)

Christ has named Satan. Now, Satan demands that Christ prove his identity as the Son of God. He spirits Christ away to the top of the temple and orders Christ to give evidence of his divinity by hurling himself from the pinnacle. This use of physical force is the last resort for Satan. His wily tongue has proved ineffectual and so he is reduced to the ignominy of violence.

Even in the face of perilous physical danger, Christ remains aloof and calm, and miraculously he does not fall but safely stands. It is a striking visual scene and Milton does not fail to play up all the traditional metaphorical meanings of the word "stood" (IV, 561). Rather than being Christ's downfall this final encounter results in the conclusive defeat of Satan. He is overcome by the revelation of Christ's divinity. As the Son of God defeated him in the war in Heaven, not by overt violence but by his very presence and voice, so here, Satan, untouched physically, is completely shattered. Ironically, it is he that falls.

The battle is finished. Christ has withstood all the trials and temptations and is now free to rest and relax in the comfort of the tender ministrations of the angels. The heavenly hymn that concludes the poem summarizes the events while metaphorically illustrating the
harmony of this triumphant and happy ending.

As *Paradise Regained* is in many ways a sequel to *Paradise Lost* and because it deals with many of the same themes and ideas, it is quite natural to compare the two works. Very often, the more austere style of *Paradise Regained* suffers in the light of the eloquence of Milton's major epic, although many assert the greater technical excellence of the brief epic as does Mr. Daiches in the excerpt quoted below. Mr. Daiches' comparison of the qualities of the two poems is helpful in order to see the value of each in proper perspective. He first contrasts the styles of the poems and then explains why we are drawn to *Paradise Lost* and tend to view it as Milton's greatest accomplishment:

*Paradise Regained* is a more perfect poem than *Paradise Lost* from the point of view of consistency of tone and subordination of all the parts to the whole. But it is far more limited not only in subject but also in the poetic devices employed for expanding the area of suggestion. *Paradise Regained* is about Christ resisting Satan in a symbolic and model débat; *Paradise Lost* is about *la condition humaine.*

The remark noting the limited use of poetic devices is of particular interest in terms of the scope of this essay. As the analysis of *Paradise Regained* in this chapter has indicated, Milton's basic method of portraying good and evil and the temptation is through the metaphor of language. Many of his characteristic eye and ear images can be discerned. But there is no elaborate network of recurring images fundamental to the structure and interpretation such as is found in *Comus* and most especially in *Paradise Lost.*
FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER IV)


CHAPTER V.

SAMSON AGONISTES

Samson Agonistes is Milton's last published work. Like the other major poems its theme is temptation. But unlike the earlier works, Milton does not stress dramatic conflict between the tempter and the tempted.

The poem begins in medias res. Samson has already succumbed to Dalila's pleas and revealed the secret of his strength. In so doing, he delivers himself into the hands of his enemies, but more importantly, he has defied God. Now blinded and imprisoned, he faces a very different type of temptation. This is not the classic Miltonic confrontation such as when Comus tempts the Lady, or Satan corrupts Adam and Eve, or again when Satan disputes with Christ in the desert. Here, Samson's ordeal is a personal and internal struggle against despair. His self-hatred and guilt have engendered a despondency that is at times suicidal. It is the opposite extreme to the sin of pride. Manoa, Dalila, Harapha, and even the Chorus and the Messenger all inadvertently contribute to the process of the trying and teaching of Samson.

Ms. Ellis-Fermor has worked out a helpful analysis of the stages of Samson's temptation that explains the role that each person plays in bringing about his spiritual healing. Her theory of the temptation is best expressed by this comment:

98
The quality and kind of stimuli that Milton applies to Samson's mind are like a highly skilled course of psychotherapy: each comes at its due moment, before which it would have been overpowering and after which inadequate. We are in the hands of a man who knows this experience intimately and of an artist who can assemble the raw material of life into form. Event, even minor event, such as Manoa's visit, serves simply to stimulate that mental progress which is the action. The sole function of event is thus, until the climax of the play, to produce thought or emotion, not as in the drama of action, to reveal them. Samson's mind moves forward a necessary stage on its journey because Manoa—or Harapha or Dalila—visits him; by the way he receives each successively he reveals the stage to which the last has brought him. Only at the end does his mind show itself in action and event cease to function solely as the cause and become simultaneously the result of thought.  

Ultimately, through this temptation of the spirit, Samson conquers his perversity and frees himself from crippling despair. Paradoxically, his death (that he begged for as a release from his suffering) signals his triumphant reinstatement as an instrument of God's will.

Throughout the poem, Milton's characteristic utilization of sound and sight imagery can be recognized at work. Characters are described through details of appearance and viewpoint—and through the all-important revelations of their language. However, as in Paradise Regained, the imagery of Samson Agonistes does not perform primary structural and interpretative functions to the extent that it does in Comus and Paradise Lost.

The first act of the tragedy begins with a long speech by Samson. The opening lines give concrete evidence of Samson's blind-
ness. His pitiful request, "A little onward lend thy guiding hand / To these dark steps, a little further on" (1, 2) illustrates the depths to which the glorious warrior has fallen. His soliloquy serves as a brief summary of the historical facts of the situation. It also shows us how Samson is imprisoned not only physically by his enemies but also spiritually by his despair.

The metaphorical implications of blindness are stressed. In the final segment of the speech as Samson bewails his loss of sight, it is suggested that his blindness is as much internal as external. These excerpts from the speech illustrate this point:

Light the prime work of God to me is extinct...
(70)

O first created Beam, and thou great Word, "Let there be light, and light was over all";
Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree?
(83-85)

Since light so necessary is to life,
And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the Soul,
She all in every part; why was the sight
To such a tender ball as th'eye confin'd?
So obvious and so easy to be quench't,
And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,
That she might look at will through every pore?
Then had I not been thus exil'd from light;
As in the land of darkness yet in light,
To live a life half dead, a living death,
And buried.
(90-101)

The soliloquy ends as Samson hears visitors approach. His vulnerability is illustrated by his fear; he assumes that it is tormentors come to insult him (I., 111-114). However, he is wrong -- it is the chorus, a group of friends come to comfort him. Their response
to the sight of Samson permits a comparison with his former glory:

O change beyond report, thought, or belief.
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,
With languish't head unpropt,
As one past hope, abandon'd,
And by himself given over;
In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds
O'erworn and soil'd;
Or do my eyes misrepresent?

(117-124)

His dishevelled appearance and lack of spirit exemplify his depressed condition. Later in the first speech of the chorus the paradoxes involved in physical and spiritual vision are discussed:

Which shall I first bewail,
Thy Bondage or lost Sight,
Prison within Prison
Inseparably dark?
Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)
The Dungeon of thyself; thy Soul
(Which Men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)
Imprison'd now indeed,
In real darkness of the body dwells,
Shut up from outward light
To incorporate with gloomy night;
For inward light, alas,
Puts forth no visual beam.

(151-163)

As in the analyses of the previous poems, we find in Samson the same insistence on the power of language to persuade and convince.

The chorus tells Samson that they have come to console him:

apt words have power to swage

The tumors of a troubl'd mind,
And are as Balm to fester'd wounds.

(184-186)

Samson confesses his weakness and absolves Dalila from fault in a passage that uses similar imagery:
Of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who vanquished with a peal of words (O weakness!)
Gave up my fort of silence to a Woman.
(233-236)

The metaphorical use of the meanings of speaking and deafness effectively conveys Samson's condemnation of Israel's rulers who ignored his divine mission:

I on th' other side
Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds,
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the doer;
But they persisted deaf, and would not seem
To count them things worth notice.
(246-250)

Again, the language metaphor -- words as weapons -- is used by Samson to express the aggravation of his sorrow upon hearing that Manoa is approaching: "Ay me, another inward grief awak't / With mention of that name renews th'assault" (330-331).

The interview between Samson and Manoa is considered the second act of the tragedy. Samson's despair and remorse for his sin has been established in the first act. Now, Manoa comes with his sympathetic fatherly concern and tries to console Samson by suggesting that God has not dealt fairly with him. He promises to try to obtain Samson's release from the Philistinian Lords. However, instead of giving comfort, Manoa's words force Samson to defend Heaven, and to accept responsibility for his actions in a mature fashion. He rejects the possibility of purchased freedom, choosing rather to expiate his sin by accepting the punishment of his captors.
Sound and sight imagery is employed to useful advantage in this exchange between father and son. The first instance is Manoa's astonishment at the physical change in his son (340 ff.). As the chorus did, he emphasizes the woeful plight of Samson in captivity. Manoa ends his outburst by questioning God's providence and this remark elicits Samson's acceptance of guilt for his sin. In recounting the story of his temptation by Dalila, he describes her methods of attack by means of a metaphor that is characteristically Miltonic;

Language is portrayed in terms of weaponry:

Yet the fourth time, when must ring all her wiles,
With blandish't parleys, feminine assaults,
Tongue batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
To storm me over-watch't, and wearied out.

(402-405)

In an effective sight image, he contrasts the blindness of his critical faculties with the physical impediment that he now suffers:

"... that blindness worse than this, / That saw not how degenerately I serv'd" (418-419). Another visual reference aptly portrays his despair as Manoa leaves to bargain for his release:

All otherwise to me my thoughts portend,
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,
Nor th'other light of life continue long,
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand.

(590-594)

One of the most controversial aspects of Samson Agonistes is the character of Dalila. Like Milton's Satan, the success of this portrait of the malign temptress is indicated by the many sympathetic arguments offered in her defense. A few notable examples of supporters of Dalila are Ms. Nicolson, Mr. Empson and Mr. Allen.
Ms. Nicolson accepts Dalila at her own evaluation. She rightly recognizes the hypocrisy which invests the earlier speeches but unaccountably believes Dalila's protestations of patriotism:

We have seen her showing much the same subtlety as Satan in his temptation of Eve, and indeed her basic approach is very similar, based as it is on hypocrisy. When she has played her last card, she throws aside all hypocrisy, and becomes what she is and has been throughout Samson's whole acquaintance with her—a Philistine patriot.3

Mr. Empson produces a very well argued case for Dalila.4 He goes to great lengths to prove that Dalila's reason for betraying Samson was an almost statesman-like attempt to unite the factions of the Hebrews and Philistines. He describes the final speech of Dalila as "one of the noblest speeches in Milton".5 He is apparently unaware of the echoes of Satanic pride that ring through every line.

We cannot but admire the ingenuity with which Mr. Allen excuses Dalila. He certainly seems to demand that the reader grant Dalila much more than the "little chivalrous indulgence" that he asks for, when he expects us to accept his account of her motivations:

If we will be just a little tender with this "Hyena," we can readily understand the pressures under which the fragile resistance of her slender intelligence collapsed. She wanted to know her husband's secret; she knew him to be a fickle lover; she feared for the seemingly reckless man who fought lions and armies single-handed; she was overwhelmed by the prestige of princes and archbishops, by Church and State.7

In contrast to these favorable comments is the very different assessment of Dalila's character offered by A.W. Verity.8 The following excerpt from his discussion of Dalila illustrates his opinion:
In Dalila there is no touch of remorse, no strain of compunction: and this want is due to her moral callousness, to the heartlessness which seems the key to her character. As sign of her moral indifference we note the glib readiness with which she invokes to her defence the most solemn motives - duty to country, reverence of religion, love of her husband, though she cares for none of these things, but merely juggles with the words as if they were counters, like a clever casuist who to win a victory in debate will stoop to any sophistry.

The dramatic value to the poem of the confrontation between Dalila and Samson is beyond dispute. Dalila is the temptress who beguiled and deceived Samson. Although he confesses his responsibility for his action, it was the combination of her feminine charm and her rhetoric that undermined his will. It is very necessary, both psychologically and dramatically, that Samson meet his deadly adversary again.

As we would expect, sound and sight imagery plays a part both in characterizing Dalila, and in describing her attempt to overcome Samson's deep hate and distrust of her. The first glimpse we have of Dalila is through an extended simile that likens her to a "stately Ship" (714). The chorus then continues with a graphic description of Dalila's response to Samson's plight:

Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps
And words address seem into tears dissolv'd,
Wetting the borders of her silk'n veil.

(728-730)

Dalila's words reflect her beautiful appearance. Her speeches are smooth and credible and cunningly orchestrated to appeal to emotion. Samson's curt violent responses contrast with her apparently sincere and reasonable requests for forgiveness. Yet, although he is no rhetorician, Samson succeeds in refuting each of Dalila's attempts to
excuse her actions. Her arguments are masterpieces of evasion and subterfuge. She gives several motives for her betrayal of Samson; as he challenges each explanation she produces another.

Several instances of language imagery appear in this debate. Dalila complains that the priest was “ever at my ear” (858) urging her to deceive Samson. She employs two language metaphors in the following passage:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{What had I} \\
\text{To oppose against such powerful arguments?} \\
\text{Only my love of thee held long debate,} \\
\text{And combined in silence all these reasons} \\
\text{With hard contest: at length that grounded maxim} \\
\text{So rife and celebrated in the mouths} \\
\text{Of wisest men, that to the public good} \\
\text{Private respects must yield, with grave authority} \\
\text{Took full possession of me and prevail'd.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(861-869)

When Dalila offers Samson eternal loving care, he refuses, claiming:

“So much of Adder's wisdom I have learn't / To fence my ear against thy sorceries” (936-937).

Dalila has offered all of her arguments and employed all of her feminine wiles. When spurned, she reveals the malice and pride that her Satanic rhetoric has been concealing. Her last speech, in which she depicts herself as a heroine, is a masterpiece of self-deception. Milton also inserts a generous amount of irony to undermine her eloquence, for we know that she will not in fact achieve the status of heroine among her own people, but be remembered as the historic example of the faithless temptress.
Milton uses the discussion of riddles that follows Dalila's departure as an effective introduction to the fourth act of the play, the visit of Harapha. The Chorus teases Samson about the identity of this newcomer by means of an adroit description contrasting Dalila and Harapha in terms of their language:

Look now for no enchanting voice, nor fear
The bait of honied words; a rougher tongue
Draws hitherward.

(1065-1067)

Sight imagery now comes into play. Not only his words but also his physical presence proclaim Harapha as a formidable warrior:

I know him by his stride,
The Giant Harapha of Gath, his look
Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.

(1067-1069)

Though he is not dressed for battle, he is clearly an enemy:

"His habit carries peace, his brow defiance" (1073).

In the confrontation between the two warriors, insults and accusations are thrown and repelled with the force of blows -- words are weapons. Sight and sound references are sprinkled throughout the dialogue. Harapha tells Samson:

I now am come to see of whom such noise
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,
If thy appearance answer loud report.

(1088-1090)

Samson asserts that in combat he would have no trouble in defeating Harapha:

I only with an Oak'n staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcryes on thy clatter'd Iron,
Which long shall not withhold me from thy head...

(1123-1125)
He later speaks of God "whose ear is ever open; and his eye / Gracious to re-admit the suppliant" (1172-1173). These ear and eye references recall *Paradise Lost*, Book III, line 193, when God says, "Mine ear shall not be slow, mine eye not shut."

Another instance of the use of effective language imagery is in this insulting retort made by Samson to Harapha: "Tongue-doughty Giant, how dost thou prove me these?" (1181). Later, Harapha, who is running out of excuses for refusing to battle with the eager Samson, exclaims: "O Baalzebub! can my ears unus'd / Hear these dishonors, and not render death?" (1231-1232). He finally leaves, having had the worst of this battle of words, his defeat illustrated by his appearance as the Chorus reports:

> His Giantship is gone somewhat crestfall'n,  
> Stalking with less unconsci'nable strides,  
> And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe.  
> (1244-1246)

Harapha's function in the temptation is to arouse Samson to a state of readiness for action. When he retires at the end of the conflict, Samson has been healed of his bitter apathy and released from the bondage of his lethargy. However, he still has no idea that God may have further uses for him and he finishes by wishing again for a speedy death to end his captivity.

The final act of the tragedy is begun by the arrival of a messenger from the Philistines who require Samson's presence at their feast. Samson refuses three times, displaying his new resolution and
courtesy in his calm refusals. Before the messenger returns to ask again, Samson experiences an intimation of God's intention and complies with the request. Manoa returns with news of his progress in negotiating Samson's release. Dramatic irony results when shouts from the Theater interrupt their conversation -- Samson has found his release. Finally, the Hebrew messenger rushes in to describe the destruction of the Theater by Samson. The sorrow of Manoa and the Chorus at the loss of son and friend is overshadowed by their joy in this triumphant conclusion to Samson's tragedy.

In this last act there is a special emphasis on ear and voice images. This is almost a requirement dictated by the fact that the destruction of the Theater occurs offstage (as decorum demands) and is only heard and described. There are many instances of minor references to ear imagery. The Chorus instructs Samson:

Go and the Holy One
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve his glory best, and spread his name
Great among the Heathen round.

(1427-1430)

Later, the Chorus tells Manoa that they "thirst to hear" (1456) his news. Manoa exclaims as his words are interrupted by the first shout from the Theater: "What noise or shout was that? it tore the Sky" (1472). Ironically this a shout of acclaim for Samson's feats of strength from the very crowd who will soon cry out in terror as he destroys them with that same strength.

The second shout from the Theater contrasts horribly with the first as both the Chorus and Manoa testify; the Chorus' description is
particularly evocative:

Noise call you it or universal groan.
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd?
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

(1511-1514)

As Manoah questions the distraught messenger, ear imagery is again employed: "The accident was loud, and here before thee / With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not" (1552-1553). The messenger responds: "It would burst forth, but I recover breath / And sense distract, to know well what I utter" (1555-1556). He hesitates to tell Manoah the news"... lest evil tidings with too rude irruption / Hitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep" (1567-1568). His account of the events in the Theater includes this striking use of a sound image that recalls similar references to the devils' "clamor" in Paradise Lost:

At sight of him the people with a shout
Rifted the Air clamoring thir god with praise,
Who made thir dreadful enemy thir thrall.

(1620-1622)

There are also several visual and sight references in this last section of the poem. First, the haste of the Philistian messenger is conveyed by this brief phrase: "speed in his look" (1304). The Hebrew Messenger later describes the horrible sight of the destruction of the Philistines in these apt words:

O whither shall I run, or which way fly
The sight of this so horrid spectacle
Which erst my eyes beheld and yet behold?
For dire imagination still pursues me.

(1541-1544)
And there is another reference to the paradox of inward and outward vision in the Semichorus' comparison of the sinful Philistines and Samson. They are "with blindness internal struck" (1686).

While he, though blind of sight,
Despis'd and thought extinguish't quite,
With inward eye illuminated
His fiery virtue rous'd
From under ashes into sudden flame.
(1687-1691)

This analysis of the sound and sight imagery in Samson Agonistes has attempted to show that the tragedy, like all of Milton's major poetic achievements, employs this same specific imagery to portray character and to explore the theme of temptation. It has also been maintained that the role of the imagery in Samson is subordinate, and does not perform the definite structural and interpretative roles that sound and sight images do in Comus and Paradise Lost.

As in Paradise Regained, the absence of real action and substantial dramatic conflict makes the work seem pale in comparison to the splendours of Paradise Lost. But here again, when we consider the poem in the light of the aims of the poet, we discover that it has its own particular beauty and excellence.
FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER V)


2 Ellis-Fermor, pp. 204, 205.


5 Empson, p. 221.


7 Allen, p. 58.

8 A.W. Verity, "Introduction to Samson Agonistes", in Hone, pp. 147-149.

9 Verity, pp. 147, 148.
AFTERWORD

The value of this attempt to analyse the sound and sight imagery in Milton's poetic works may well be disputed -- there have been many much more learned and elaborate discussions of Milton's imagery than this. There is a real danger of "overreading" a work as Mr. Adams has suggested in his discussion of Comus. There is a further danger of reading too much into an artist's productions by establishing a theory and forcing it upon his hapless creations. It is hoped that this essay has avoided each of these pitfalls and helped to offer some new perspective on Milton's poetic technique. Milton is a great poet and his work can not only withstand the closest inspection, but also becomes more meaningful in the light of each new viewpoint.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


