

Remapping Milton: Space, Place and Influence 1700-1800

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*A thesis is an act and trial of love:
An act of great devotion, faith and power;
A fearful trial all other trials above,
For if that love should wither and grow sour,
The pleasant fields of knowledge, green and fair,
Turn to a desert bitterer than Hell;
The fountain sparkling in the summer air
Becomes a brackish, deep and cheerless well.
Yet still the pilgrims come, and each in turn
Will swear their chosen subject never palls.
They love to read, to write, to teach, to learn,
They love the libraries and lecture halls,
And see a thesis as a means to prove
Their ardent, faithful and enduring love.*

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Thesis Summary

In my examination of the influence of John Milton's poetry on eighteenth century literature, I argue that eighteenth-century writers engage with ideas of space and place as they seek to transform Miltonic verse into a suitable medium for describing the Newtonian astronomy and imperial geography of their day. My first chapter examines John Philips's *Cyder* and John Dyer's *The Fleece* alongside county maps and commercial atlases, as part of a study of how their verse appropriates Milton's politics and revises his geography. In my second chapter, I use digital mapping technology to explore the different viewing perspectives James Thomson uses in *The Seasons*, how they derive from Milton, and how they support his project to describe a harmonious, providential global geography. My third chapter investigates adaptations of Milton's *A Mask Performed at Ludlow Castle* (1634). Across the eighteenth century, *A Mask* generated an opera, a play and a novel, and I examine how the meaning of each adaptation changes due to the altered place and context of performance. In my last two chapters, I argue that the female tradition of astronomical poetry seeks to reconcile Miltonic verse with Newtonian science whilst also critiquing it from a devotional perspective. Finally, I claim that Ann Yearsley and Charlotte Smith used Milton's influence as a means to usurp the exclusively male territory of the eighteenth-century prospect poem, through poetry written from Clifton Hill in Bristol and Beachy Head on the South Downs. In my coda on William Wordsworth I conclude that to view him as the culmination of eighteenth-century engagement with Milton is to bias our understanding of both authors. Reconsidering Milton's eighteenth-century influence is a vital part not only of understanding the worldview of the age, but also of distinguishing Milton himself from what the eighteenth century made of him.

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List of Abbreviations

<i>CPW</i>	<i>The Complete Prose Works of John Milton</i> , ed. by Don M. Wolfe et al., 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953-81)
<i>Com</i>	Dalton, John, <i>Comus</i> (London, 1790)
<i>Cy</i>	Philips, John, <i>Cyder. A Poem in Two Books</i> , ed. by John Goodridge and J. C. Pellicer (Cheltenham: Cyder Press, 2001)
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>Fl</i>	Dyer, John, <i>The Fleece: A Poem in Four Books</i> , ed. by John Goodridge and J. C. Pellicer (Cheltenham: Cyder Press, 2007)
<i>Mask</i>	Milton, John, <i>A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle in The Complete Works of Milton Volume III: The Shorter Poems</i> , ed. by Thomas N Corns and Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
<i>PL</i>	Milton, John, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , ed. by Alastair Fowler, (London: Longman, 1976)
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Society of America</i>
<i>PR</i>	Milton, John, <i>The Complete Works of John Milton, Volume II: The 1671 Poems: Paradise Regain'd and Samson Agonistes</i> , ed. by Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studies in English Literature 1500-1900</i>

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Introduction

Since its original coinage, Alfred Korzbyski's aphorism that 'the map is not the territory' has acquired the force of a philosophical truism, widely applied in fields as diverse as computing and neuroscience.¹ It is also true of Milton Studies, where for the last three hundred and fifty years since the publication of *Paradise Lost* various critical maps of the vast territory of this cosmographic work have been sequentially put forward, endorsed, challenged and rejected. We have come a long way from Sir Walter Raleigh's *Milton* (1900) with its proclamation that *Paradise Lost* is a 'monument to dead ideas', a magazine of exploded systems of knowledge, to reach our developing critical understanding of the place of *Paradise Lost* in our conception of the world, and the wider universe, in which we live.²

Raleigh's view of the poem is the product of a version of literary history which is still too much with us—one that ignores or denigrates Milton's use by eighteenth-century poets to describe the geography, astronomy and science of their own day, in favour of the internalisation of Milton by Romantic poets as a model of psychological sublimity and/or rebellion. This relative neglect of the Miltonic poetry of the eighteenth century has led to cases where Milton's singularity has been exaggerated, and cases where eighteenth-century interpretations of Milton still bias our understandings of *Paradise Lost*. In particular, we have neglected the chance to examine how eighteenth-century writers used Milton to express a Newtonian understanding of the universe, and to articulate a positive vision of Britain's colonial empire. To better comprehend our eighteenth-century inheritance, we need first to

¹ For the original maxim, see Alfred Korzbybski, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, 4th ed. (Lakeville, Conn.: Institute of General Semantics, 1958), p. 58.

² Sir Walter Raleigh, *Milton* (London: Edwin Arnold, 1900), p.88.

review the development of our critical understanding of Milton's astronomy, his geography, and his influence on the eighteenth century itself.

Mapping Milton's Cosmos

The success of eighteenth-century astronomical poems in reconciling Miltonic poetry with the Newtonian cosmos should have given a check to the opinions of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics, for whom Milton's cosmology was essentially backward-looking. Instead, it is only with John Leonard's *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of Paradise Lost, 1667-1970* (2013) that we have begun to reacquire a grasp of the cosmology of *Paradise Lost*, the astronomical theory of this fictional universe, which is akin to Milton's own. Generations of Milton critics have read the poem's cosmographic structure as a Ptolemaic, geocentric system, a view of the universe which even in Milton's day was fast losing ground to a Copernican, heliocentric model. Drawing upon eighteenth-century commentary on *Paradise Lost* for a precedent, Leonard discards this Ptolemaic thesis, proposing a new reading that recasts the passage where Milton seems to endorse a Ptolemaic geocentric cosmology as part of an ironic anti-Catholic joke.³ With this principal stumbling block gone, Leonard outlines a conception of space in *Paradise Lost* that seems shockingly modern, prefiguring the vast interstellar spaces that define modern astrophysical cosmology. It seems as if our map, or conception of the cosmology of *Paradise Lost*, did not correspond sufficiently with the territory of the poem itself.

Leonard's argument for the jettisoning of nineteenth and twentieth-century Ptolomaic readings of Milton's cosmography is best illustrated by his criticism of the 'diagram of the

³ For Leonard's full analysis and explication of *PL* III. 481-96, including the unlikely but delightful speculation that this episode from the poem may have inspired a scene in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), see *Faithful Labourers*, pp.705-9.

cosmos' from David Masson's introduction to Milton's *Poetical Works* (1877).⁴ This Victorian edition was the standard edition for at least sixty years, shaping generations of readers in their approach to Milton.⁵ They could scarcely have had a more confident guide: he is so proud of his cosmological diagrams that before displaying them he warns us sternly of their importance.

The diagrams are not mere illustrations of what Milton *may* have conceived in his scheme of his poem. They are what he did conceive and most tenaciously keep before his mind from first to last; and, unless they are thoroughly grasped, the poem will not be stood as a whole, and many portions of it will be misinterpreted.⁶

Unfortunately, Masson's own misinterpretations are legion. The very notion of Heaven and Hell as opposite regions of an enclosed multiversal sphere is unsustainable. Caught in a downdraft after leaving Hell, Milton tells us that Satan falls 'Ten thousand fathom deep, and to this hour / Down had been falling,' (*PL* II. 934-5) if an unlucky updraught had not thrown him back up as far as he descended. This is a vivid insight into the infinite spaces of Milton's Chaos: if not for that updraught, Satan might have been falling for the entire six-thousand-year period that separates the poem's narrator from the events he relates. Masson depicts a cosmology with Hell at the bottom of the multiverse and Heaven at the top, but the enclosing

⁴ John Milton, *The Poetical Works*, ed. by David Masson (London: Macmillan, 1877).

⁵ Among these students was my maternal grandfather, Ronald Heppleston, and one of the small pleasures of this thesis is that I can refer immediately below to the edition of Milton which he received as a prize for Scripture Studies from Bolton Municipal Grammar School, in the year 1930.

⁶ John Milton, *The Poetical Works*, ed. by David Masson (London: Macmillan, 1929), pp.29-30.

wall of his circle does not exist. Hell is not the bottom of the abyss, but instead floats freely in the infinity of Chaos.

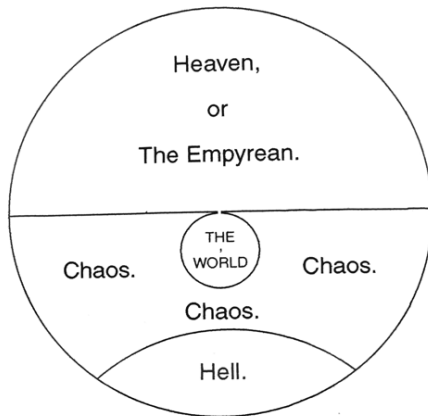


Figure 1. David Masson's 'Diagram of the Universal Infinitude'.



Figure 2. Medieval T-O map.

The sparseness of Masson's map leaves many features of Milton's cosmography unrepresented, such as the Pavilion of Chaos, the ladder by which the angels come and go between Heaven and Earth, or the causeway Death and Sin build between Hell and the World after the fall of man. Its prime claim to accuracy is scale. Applying the commonly accepted gloss of 'pole' as referring to the farthest pole of the starry universe, Masson has read the line wherein Satan is placed 'As far removed from God and Light of Heaven/ As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole' (*PL* I. 74-5) as expressing a precise and mathematically quantifiable relationship. Arguing that 'Milton dares to be exact' Masson renders Milton's lines equivalent to the mathematical formula $y = 3x$, where y is defined as the distance between the gates of Hell and the borders of Heaven, and x is defined as the radius of the stellar universe,

the distance between its centre and its furthest edge.⁷ Masson's map asserts the priority of this formula in determining Milton's cosmology.

Masson's approach runs into significant problems when Milton contradicts his earlier lines about the distance between Hell and Heaven. At the close of Book II, Satan, having left the Pavilion of Chaos, looks across the vast abyss towards Heaven and the stellar universe (confusingly, for modern readers, referred to as 'the world' throughout). According to Masson's diagram, one would expect the world to loom large in Satan's vision, perhaps even occluding a large portion of the Empyrean from his view. In fact, matters are far otherwise.

[Satan is] at leisure to behold
Far off th'empyreal Heav'n, extended wide
In circuit, undetermined square or round
With opal tow'rs and battlements adorned
Of living sapphire, once his native seat;
And fast by hanging in a golden chain
This pendent world, in bigness as a star
Of smallest magnitude close by the moon. (*PL* II. 1046-53)

That Milton's Heaven, 'undetermined square or round' seems hard to equate with Masson's bare semicircle, one might ascribe to the simplicity of his diagram, but the comparison of the stellar universe to a 'star of smallest magnitude' drastically upsets the proportions suggested by Masson. John Leonard concludes that 'these two pictures cannot be reconciled' and advances two theories: either that Milton always intended the expansion of his universe at this point to come as a surprise to the reader, or alternatively that 'Milton surprises himself by discovering, in the process of composition, just how much space his poem needs.'⁸ Masson's scale, like the enclosing wall of his universe, is unsupported by a reading of the poem.

⁷ Despite the multiple Ptolemaic readings of Milton's cosmology, nowhere in *Paradise Lost* is the centre of the universe explicitly identified with Earth.

⁸ Leonard, *Faithful Labourers*, p.271. Cf. B A Wright, 'Masson's Diagram of Milton's Spaces', *The Review of English Studies*, 21.81 (1945), 42-44, which argues that 'the poet is not measuring off the distance but saying that it is immeasurable' (p.43).

The deficiencies of Masson's map betray his medievalist bias. His thesis is that *Paradise Lost* describes a geocentric, Ptolemaic vision of the stellar universe, referencing but not adopting Galileo's astronomical discoveries. Later on he produces a diagram from the works of the thirteenth-century astronomer Sacrobosco to illustrate the structure of earth and the planets, confidently declaring Milton's cosmology to be in harmony with the classical and medieval notions of the universe. It is perhaps to be expected that his diagram of the cosmos, consciously or unconsciously, recalls the medieval T-O map presented in figure 2. Like Masson's it is a diagrammatic simplification of a complex reality; like Masson's it is framed within a circular arena; like Masson's the top half of the circle is dominated by a single area: 'Asia' and 'Heaven' respectively.⁹ Masson's diagram of the cosmos solidifies his critical assumptions, forcing the poem into preconceived medieval framework quite unlike the one that develops from Leonard's close reading of the text. Leonard mentions that it is still used on some teaching websites as a tool for understanding the poem's cosmology, and its longevity is a fascinating insight into the attractiveness and tenacity of maps as power claims.¹⁰

Milton's Geography Unmapped

If, as Dennis Danielson informs us 'the meme of Milton's Ptolomaism keeps reproducing itself' and Masson's diagram is at least partly to blame, its success is bolstered by the fact that it is not rivalled by a large inheritance of visual materials from published editions of the poem.¹¹ While illustrated editions of *Paradise Lost* are not hard to find, maps are rarely a part of the editorial apparatus surrounding the poem in either its many modern scholarly editions

⁹ Some T-O maps also place 'Paradisium' in Asia, to mark the presumed location of Eden.

¹⁰ Leonard, *Faithful Labourers*, p.738.

¹¹ Dennis Danielson, *Paradise Lost and the Cosmological Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 121.

or in our sizeable inheritance of eighteenth and nineteenth-century texts. It is worth considering why this should be. Editors of epic poetry in general do not skimp on the use of such visual aids: a map of Odysseus's wanderings has been a feature of the classic E.V. Rieu translation since the founding of the Penguin Classics line in 1946, and similar resources have been provided for other migratory epics, such as Camoen's *The Lusiads* and Virgil's *Aeneid*.¹² It is fair to say that no self-respecting publisher would even think of putting out a new translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* without providing a plan to the various circles of Hell, terraces of Purgatory and spheres of Paradise into which Dante corrals his immense cast of human souls; indeed, the tradition of providing such an accompanying aid stretches as far back as the map drawn by Sandro Botticelli for a notable late fifteenth-century codex of the poem.¹³ Milton's epic operates on an equally cosmographic scale, and yet traditionally the task of referring one of his passing geographical references into its modern equivalent has been deferred to the footnotes, and not to any accompanying map. We are not customarily treated to any illustration of Satan's heroic journey from Hell to Earth, nor of Raphael's descent from Heaven to the Garden of Eden, nor of the intercontinental panorama Adam sees from the hilltop in the poem's final books. Eden itself, a place subject to a rich tradition of imaginary cartography since long before Calvin, remains unmapped. While representations of Milton's cosmology could embody critical misreadings, representations of his geography

¹² Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. E V Rieu (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946). For popular, accessible editions of epic poetry from the same publisher, see also Luiz Vaz de Camoens, *The Lusiads*, trans. William C. Atkinson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952) and *Virgil's Aeneid*, trans. John Dryden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997). All three editions come with maps, which are noticeably lacking in the Penguin edition of *Paradise Lost*, ed. John Leonard (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 2000).

¹³ There is an extremely useful high-resolution version of this map available alongside a digitally interactive version at 'The World of Dante' <http://www.worldofdante.org/maps_main.html> [accessed 6 February 2015]. Both are best read alongside Deborah Parker's accompanying essay "Illuminating Botticelli's Chart of Hell" *MLN, Italian Issue*, 128 (2013), p.83-102. Another fascinating resource is for fifteenth and sixteenth century maps of Dante's cosmography is 'Illustrations from Early Printed Editions of the Commedia', at <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/image/digitized-images/> [accessed 16th November 2017].

were largely absent or unattempted. Only with the rise of post-colonial criticism would serious scholarly attention be paid to Milton's geography.

In his pioneering *Geographical Dictionary of Milton* (1919), Allan H. Gilbert made the robust claim that, 'In the poetry of Milton geography is rivalled in importance by none of the sciences except Astronomy'.¹⁴ However, while new discussions of Milton's astronomy were a regular occurrence, it would take until 1951 for Robert Cawley to write the obvious successor volume to Gilbert's work: *Milton and the Literature of Travel*, a comprehensive analysis of Milton's use of contemporary atlases and travel narratives as material for his poetry. One reason for this lack of critical interest was the anti-Miltonist criticism of the early twentieth century, for the influential T.S. Eliot would single out Milton's geographical imagination as a particular weakness of his poetry. One of his targets was an extended panorama from Book XI of *Paradise Lost*,

from the destined walls
Of Cambalu, seat of Cathayan Khan
And Samarkand by Oxus, Temir's throne,
To Paquin of Sinaean kings, and thence
To Agra and Lahor of great mogul
Down to the golden Chersonese, or where
The Persian in Ecbatan sat, or since
In Hispahan, or where the Russian Czar
In Mosco, or the sultan in Bizance
Turchestan-born (PL XI. 388-96)

For Eliot, this listing of exotic proper nouns is not 'serious poetry, not poetry fully occupied with its business, but rather a solemn game'.¹⁵ Even when he singles out a passage from

¹⁴ Allan H. Gilbert, *A Geographical Dictionary of Milton* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919). p.vii. It is probably this study of Milton's geography that John Crowe Ransom, in one of the founding documents of New Criticism, excludes from the business of criticism on the grounds that it is one of those 'special studies which deal with some abstract or prose content taken out of the work.' The division Ransom lays down between these specialist studies and criticism, which must deal with their literary assimilation, might also go some way to explaining the lack of critical interest in this field during the early twentieth century. See John Crowe Ransom, 'Criticism, Inc.' in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd. ed. (London; New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010), pp.979-80.

¹⁵ Eliot, 'Milton I', p.264.

Lycidas for praise, he makes it clear he is praising ‘the single effect of grandeur of sound’ and that, for him, this is poetry that works upon no level more sophisticated than auditory gravitas.¹⁶

Among the first responders to Eliot’s attack on Milton was E.M.W. Tillyard, who mounts a defence of the passages Eliot critiques. To him, the passage from Book XI just quoted is no mere roll of names, but a great historical and geographical summary of the world since Eden, where each individual name must be contextualised for full effect, and he accuses Eliot of writing ‘as if Marco Polo and Camoens had never existed or aroused men’s interests’.¹⁷ This helpfully expands our appreciation from Eliot’s ‘single effect’, even if the ‘interests’ Tillyard invokes are still rather scholarly in their historical focus. He is on firmer ground with the passage from *Lycidas*, which Eliot had praised for grandeur.

Whether beyond the stormy *Hebrides*,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit’st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou to our moist vows deny’st
Sleep’st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great vision of the guarded Mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona’s hold.
Look homeward Angel now, and melt with ruth. (*Lycidas*, 159-63)

Tillyard’s insistence that we hold in mind, as we read this passage, the geographically specific image ‘of the Archangel Michael, guardian of the mount named after him, looking over the sea with unimpeded view to Finisterre on the north-west coast of Spain’ is a point well made.¹⁸ It re-establishes the importance of reading Milton with the aid of a geographical imagination rather than merely an auditory appreciation, as the place-names outline the

¹⁶ Eliot, ‘Milton I’, p.264. Leonard, *Faithful Labourers* concurs that Eliot’s criticism has weight, but that ‘these lines are not typical’ and ‘At their best, Milton’s catalogues are lovelier than their names’ (p.195).

¹⁷ E.M.W Tillyard, *The Miltonic Setting* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1938), p. 93.

¹⁸ Tillyard, *Miltonic Setting*, p.91-2. It is curious that in making this argument he does not restore the line ‘Look homeward Angel now and melt with ruth’ which Eliot had trimmed from his quotation. The personification of the angel Michael, and the change in the direction of his vision, is important to the sense of the passage as Tillyard argues it, and I have chosen to reattach it.

geographical boundaries of the British isles, implying the future scope of Lycidas's spirit as 'the Genius of the Shore'.¹⁹ Tillyard's reading anticipates the later argument of Lawrence Lipking, wherein the poem translates 'the martyrdom of one poor soul into an opportunity for a new English poet to tame the flood and take his rightful place', in his insistence of the dramatic element present in the poetic geography.²⁰

Once this flare of scholarly debate was past, however, interest in Milton's geography once again grew somnolent until the arrival of David Quint's *Epic and Empire* (1993). His comparison of the geography of *Paradise Lost* with the geography of Camões's *The Lusiads* was rich in critical interest, as was his argument that 'Milton invoked [Camões's] epic models [...] in order to reject them, and he satirizes the epic of empire in the role of Satan as colonialist explorer of space and the New World'.²¹ Post-colonial criticism sat up and took notice, and a new wave of interest followed. Paul Stevens's 'Paradise Lost and the Colonial Imperative' challenges Quint's wholly anti-colonial view of Milton by examining 'to what extent *Paradise Lost* authorizes colonial activity even while it satirizes the abuses of early modern colonialism', demonstrating the colonial discourses that shape God's purpose for Adam and Eve in Eden and beyond.²² In *Milton's Imperial Epic* (1996), J. Martin Evans explores Milton's incorporation of the discourse of Atlantic colonisation within *Paradise Lost*, moving beyond cruder models of influence or allegory by reading *Paradise Lost* 'as a palimpsest containing an ancient biblical text with, superimposed upon it, a modern colonial narrative written in the spaces between the biblical words.'²³ His work demonstrated the

¹⁹ Milton, *Lycidas*, l.183.

²⁰ See Lawrence Lipking, 'The Genius of the Shore: Lycidas, Adamastor, and the Poetics of Nationalism', *PMLA*, 111.2 (1996), 205–21 (p. 205).

²¹ David Quint, *Epic and Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 308–9.

²² Paul Stevens, 'Paradise Lost and the Colonial Imperative', *Milton Studies*, 34 (1996), 3–21 (p. 3).

²³ J Martin Evans, *Milton's Imperial Epic: Paradise Lost and the Discourse of Colonialism* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 5.

presence not only of an effective methodology but also of a wide arena Milton criticism had left previously unexplored.

The essay collection *Milton and the Imperial Vision* (1999) attempted to fill many of the obvious gaps left by Evans's study, such as Milton's interest in colonialism beyond the mid-Atlantic, the examination of his minor poems and polemical prose, his ecological stance, his effect on the pro-imperial poetics of James Thomson and the anti-imperial stance of William Blake, and much else besides. The second thing one notes, beyond the admirable scope of the collection, is its entirely refreshing lack of scholarly orthodoxies. Rajan, in his introduction, comes to a measured conclusion that extends and duplicates Stevens's earlier assessment.

The deployment of the languages of election, orientalism, nationalism, civility, economics, geography, and so on in his works of poetry and prose makes Milton complicit in acts of imperialism (and colonization), as well as in the critique thereof. [...] More than anyone else, Milton seems to sanction imperial thought. Yet he is also an anti-imperialist who resolutely attacks the proposition that commerce is innocent of imperial aims, freighting Satan's voyage with images of the spice trade and arguing that the domination of one people by another is incompatible with the divine donation. Milton works out his ambivalent response to imperialism on both sides of the colonial divide.²⁴

Rajan's opinion, however, is no sooner articulated than contradicted in the book's second essay, Bruce McLeod's hawkish "'The "Lordly eye": Milton and the Strategic Geography of Empire', which finds in *Paradise Lost* 'an impassioned and influential design for a Protestant English empire.'²⁵ As often where two critics of *Paradise Lost* disagree, the issue is in great part over Satan. For Rajan, the repeated similes likening Satan's progress to that of a merchant fleet seeking colonial booty are definitive proof of Milton's disapproval of England's burgeoning Imperial power. To McLeod Satan is more associated with an Eastern

²⁴ Balachandra Rajan, 'Introduction' in *Milton and the Imperial Vision*, ed. by Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer (Dusquesne: Duquesne University Press, 1999), p.5.

²⁵ Bruce McLeod, 'The "Lordly Eye" Milton and the Strategic Geography of Empire', in *Milton and the Imperial Vision*, p.66.

Tyrant, the embodiment of the disordered barbarism Milton's Protestant Empire strives against, and the famous similes are merely a warning against letting the colonial expansion of the elect nation be perverted by the satanic energies of trade and exploitation.

Milton and the Imperial Vision demonstrated that Milton's actual position on colonial issues and the nascent British Empire of the day, like so much in his poetry, remains complex, ambivalent and hotly contested. Anna-Julia Zwierlein makes a valuable contribution to the argument in *Majestick Milton: British Imperial Expansion and Transformations of Paradise Lost, 1667-1837* (2001). Strongly critical of McLeod, Zwierlein maintains that 'the postcolonial orientation behind many recent rethinkings of Milton is a reaction not so much against a historical Milton figure as against the Milton of the eighteenth century'.²⁶ By doing so she helpfully opens up space between Milton's own ambivalent relationship with colonial endeavour and the use of his poems by eighteenth-century scholars as an imperial archive, encoding imperial knowledge into the footnotes of editions of Milton, and dispatching them as teaching materials across the British Empire. Her recent article 'Purging the Visual Nerve: Exploration, "Revelation" and Cosmography in Milton Commentaries and Criticism of the Long Restoration' continues this work through a detailed examination of eighteenth-century editors and annotators of Milton. Asserting the importance of Milton's geography to his eighteenth-century reception, Zwierlein also highlights the potential of the eighteenth-century Milton to bias us in our post-colonial judgements of the poem.

The georgic writers of the eighteenth century also participated in this colonial project. Their poems recast Milton's cosmography onto the scales of local chorography or global geography, expressing visions of England ranging from a self-contained and self-sustaining

²⁶ Anne-Julia Zwierlein, *Majestick Milton: British Imperial Expansion and Transformations of Paradise Lost, 1667-1837* (Münster: Lit, 2001), pp. 5–6.

Edenic realm to a staggered vision of a pastoral heartland set in a network of national industry enmeshed in a global network of trade and commerce. By relegating poets such as John Philips, John Dyer and even the massively popular James Thomson to the backroads of criticism, we have neglected the chance to study the transformation of Milton's epic into an endorsement of colonialism, and our understanding of Milton in his own context has become blurred with what the eighteenth century made of him.

In a variety of eighteenth-century genres, including georgics, astronomical poetry, adaptations and prospect poems, we can see the uses that writers of the period made of Milton's cosmographical poetry, dividing it into its component subjects of astronomy and geography and updating it to the demands of the eighteenth-century worldview. Chief among these changes is the recentering of the nation itself as a theme for poetry. It is not sufficiently remarked how marginal Britain is to the geographies described in Milton's late poetry, where the word 'British' only appears once in *Paradise Lost* and once in *Paradise Regained*. The georgic poetry of the early to mid-eighteenth century would remedy this by placing Britain at the heart of the geographies they describe, while the female-written prospect poems of the late eighteenth century recapture some of Milton's political edge in their vivid descriptions of their own marginality within Britain and in their striving towards an authoritative poetic voice. Successive reworkings of *A Mask Performed at Ludlow Castle* would emphasise the national sympathies of this very local border masque, re-envisioning it as an Anglo-Italian hybrid opera, a crowd-pleasing piece of London theatre and an Ancient British pastoral romance. The women's tradition of astronomical poetry would stress the devotional aspect of Milton's cosmos while revising it to incorporate the religious and scientific possibilities of the Newtonian universe. All these changes, in various ways, revise Milton's conceptions of place and space to accommodate the eighteenth-century understandings of the concepts.

Recent articles on *Paradise Lost* by John Gillies and Maura Brady have situated the poem ‘on the keen edge of modernity, at a moment before space has become an absolute, an aspect either of the physical world or perception itself.’²⁷ They view *Paradise Lost* as a borderline text, occupying a liminal position between the Aristotelian notion of place and the modern, Newtonian view of space which would achieve full supremacy in the decades after the publication of the epic.²⁸ For Aristotle, the universe could be defined as a geocentric realm, whose components maintain their positions through an awareness of their natural places—the place of a rock is on the ground, the place of a cloud is in the sky, and objects which are moved out of their natural places seek to return to them. Place is an active medium which enfolds and surrounds the objects and people who are in their places. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, this notion of a universe centred on place, which (if not exactly unchallenged) had continued to be tenable for millennia, was wholly superseded by the Newtonian vision of a decentred infinite universe of absolute space, wherein the Sun and the Earth are not fixed, central objects at the universe’s heart, but mere points of location in space relative to other bodies. Space is a vast, homogenous and inert medium, and objects in this cosmos do not move to preordained places, but interact as the result of an array of forces including gravity, Newton’s most famous discovery.

Gillies and Brady chart the competing claims of place and space across *Paradise Lost*. Satan’s initial boast that ‘The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven’ (*PL* I. 254-5) exalts the integrity of the self from its surroundings. Accordingly, the fallen angels seek to alter and reshape the infernal landscape in order to

²⁷ Maura Brady, ‘Space and the Persistence of Place in *Paradise Lost*’, *Milton Quarterly*, 41: 3 (2007), 167–82 (p. 178); John Gillies, ‘Space and Place in *Paradise Lost*’, *ELH*, 74.1 (2007), 27–57.

²⁸ For an illuminating history of these concepts to which I am greatly indebted in this passage, see Edward S Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

make their situation less appalling. As Gillies notes, they ‘seek to mediate the effects of place, to disempower, relativize, nullify and escape it.’²⁹ Satan’s escape through Chaos and his flight through the stellar universe towards the Earth demonstrate his ability to move through a vast (if not exactly inert) medium very similar to Newtonian space, and the fact that Satan’s journey is not interrupted by traversing the interlocking orbs of the Ptolomaic cosmos is evidence in itself of the poem’s modernity. Place dramatically reasserts itself at the beginning of Book IV, when Satan’s boast of the mind’s independence is abruptly reversed. When Satan cries ‘Which way I fly is hell; my self am hell; / And in the lowest deep a lower deep / Still threatening to devour me opens wide’ (*PL* IV. 75-7) he recognises where he had thought he had first mitigated the pains of Hell and then escaped from its bounds, he had merely internalised it. As with the Aristotelian notion of the cosmos, the body and its ordained place are interdependent. One cannot flee the other.

Satan’s awareness of this Hell within him defines his perspective on Eden, the Earthly Paradise, a place designed to shelter and provide for its human occupants. As Gillies writes, ‘It is not simply the extreme antithesis of places which makes hell most hellish, but the embodied happiness of Adam and Eve: that which is the entire focus and *raison d’etre* of paradise.’³⁰ Their contentment within the place God has allotted them serves as a painful reminder to Satan of his fall from his original place as one of God’s servants, and that an Edenic place of shelter and respite will never again be his. With the Fall of mankind, as Brady notes, ‘Adam and Eve will be set adrift in space to search for a place in which to live out their lives’.³¹ The exile from Eden is also an exile from the homeliness of place into the less-favourable realm of space.

²⁹ Gillies, ‘Space and Place in *Paradise Lost*’, p.47.

³⁰ Gillies, ‘Space and Place in *Paradise Lost*’, p.50.

³¹ Brady, ‘Space and the Persistence of Place in *Paradise Lost*’, p.178.

With the advent of Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, it is space that comes to dominate our perceptions of the universe, and I survey how eighteenth-century writers take Milton across the border between Aristotelian place and Newtonian space, remapping Milton's spaces according to Enlightenment conceptions of astronomy and geography, but also displaying a nostalgia for the Miltonic idea of place that occurs in the Edenic description of an unchanging pastoral Britain as well as in devotional descriptions of Heaven. In doing so, I wish to show how Milton's influence facilitated the development and expression of these concepts in a period where modern criticism has often seen that influence as overshadowing, impeding, even strangling, the poets who felt it most keenly.

Milton's influence on the eighteenth century

The subject of Milton's influence begins with the advent of the twentieth century, and the publication of Sir Walter Raleigh's *Milton* (1900), which devoted a chapter to this previously neglected question. Raleigh takes the controversial position of arguing that Milton's true literary heirs were the Augustan tradition of Swift and Pope. Meanwhile, Milton's more faithful imitators are criticised for their use of a bombastic high style applied to low subjects:

Miltonic cadences became a kind of patter, and the diction that Milton had invented for the rendering of his colossal imaginations was applied indifferently to all subjects – to apple-growing, sugar-boiling, the drainage of the Bedford level, the breeding of negroes, and the distempers of sheep. Milton's shadowy grandeur, his avoidance of plain concrete terms, his manner of linking adjective with substantive [...] became a mere vicious trick of absurd periphrasis and purposeless vagueness when they were carried by his imitators into the description of common and familiar objects.³²

Such a list is intended to be appreciated as an authoritative overview, but the five examples Raleigh gives us are drawn from three poems only, in the relatively small tradition of the

³² Sir Walter Raleigh, *Milton*, quoted in John Leonard, *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of Paradise Lost, 1667-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Vol 1, p.167.

English Georgic: John Philips's *Cyder* (1708), John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757), and James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* (1764). They are hardly adequate as a map for considering the influence of Milton on eighteenth-century poetry, even before we consider whether there was a method to their Miltonic imitation that went beyond 'absurd periphrasis and purposeless vagueness'. For Raleigh, these works contain no ideas, living or otherwise—merely a Miltonic versification of commonplace, and therefore unworthy, subjects. It was not until the Marxist criticism of John Barrell's *English Literature in History, 1730-80: An Equal Wide Survey* (1983) that critics began to rescue this kind of poetry from Raleigh's contemptuous neglect, by illuminating the ideas they expressed and showing their engagement with the eighteenth-century world.

In the meantime, Raleigh's work had discovered a gap in the critical marketplace. It was soon occupied by two contrasting works on Milton's influence: John Walter Good's *Studies in the Milton Tradition* (1915) and Raymond Dexter Havens's *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (1922). Good's work presented a positive view of Milton's reception in eighteenth-century culture, concentrating on the development of his posthumous reputation across areas such as publishing history, literary biography, and popular controversies such as William Lauder's fake accusations of plagiarism. Central to Good's thesis was 'the universal and persistent power of Milton over the life and thought of the English people' in the eighteenth century. 'The grateful nation,' he writes 'breathed a pure Miltonic air' and the recreation of this harmonious atmosphere occupies much of his text.³³

Havens, in his survey of the influence of Milton's poetic diction and prosody, set himself a more rigorous goal: 'to examine, at least cursorily, all the available English poetry written between between 1660 and 1837, regardless of its esthetic value [sic] or historical

³³ John Walter Good, *Studies in the Milton Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1915), p.111.

importance, and to re-examine with more care all that seemed to have any real significance for my purposes.³⁴ Though its methodology is now a good deal out of date, and Havens finds little literary worth in the majority of the poetry he surveys, it remains a useful source of material for modern scholars, since its archival scholarship remains unsurpassed even in the Internet era.³⁵

Together the two works illustrated the central paradox of Milton's eighteenth-century influence – how could one author be so universally read and revered across eighteenth-century Britain, and yet inspire no poetry considered to be of the first rank before the advent of Blake and Wordsworth? Why was it the votaries of Milton, despite their success, could produce nothing to contest with the success of Alexander Pope in the competing tradition of Augustan Neoclassicism?

For a long line of anti-Miltonist critics, headed by T.S. Eliot, the answer was a relatively simple one; it was admitted that Milton was great in his way, or in occasional passages, but in the long term he was simply a dead end, a latinate and bookish writer whose poetry 'could only be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatever' and who might 'still be considered as having done damage to the English language from which it has not wholly recovered.'³⁶ Though Eliot was to soften his language a decade later, ceasing to blame Milton for the perceived deficiencies of eighteenth-century poetry, and no longer maintaining

³⁴ Raymond Dexter Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (Cambridge, & London: Harvard University Press, & Oxford University Press, 1922), p.ix.

³⁵ Even confining ourselves to recent accounts, Lucy Newlyn, in *Paradise Lost, and the Romantic Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) and Joseph Crawford, in *Raising Milton's Ghost* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011) cite Havens frequently in their opening chapters. Perhaps the main flaw in Havens's work is its rigidly generic structuring, in which the works of a single poet, such as John Philips, can be divided across several hundred pages, in sections devoted to 'burlesque', 'panegyric' and 'technical' poetry, without any united analysis. The specific and useful genre of British Georgic, which this thesis adopts in its discussion of John Philips and John Dyer, only came to prominence with John Chalker's *The English Georgic* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

³⁶ T.S. Eliot, 'Milton I' in *Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) p.258-9, 264.

that his influence must always be unhelpful in the future, he was resolute in his conviction that ‘the contemporary situation is such that Milton is a master whom we must avoid.’³⁷ In Eliot’s influential conception, he was no longer a poet whose works had any purchase upon the modern day. Eliot’s criticism is Raleigh’s conception of the poem as a ‘monument to dead ideas’ articulated in its most crushing form.

Eliot’s original convictions were maintained, long after Eliot himself had recanted, by F.R. Leavis, whose antipathy made him the strongest derogatory voice in the long-running argument that has become known as ‘The Milton Controversy.’ It is unnecessary to go into the full history of the charges brought and refutations made in seventy years worth of critical controversy, when John Leonard, in *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of Paradise Lost, 1667-1970* (2013), has already devoted an exhaustive chapter to the issue.³⁸ The controversy would not be definitely settled until the publication by Christopher Ricks of *Milton’s Grand Style* in 1963, but it was only when the new wave of influence theory arrived with the work of Walter Jackson Bate and Harold Bloom in the early seventies that Eliot’s conceptions of good and bad influence were to be drastically revised. Bate’s *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (1970) was the first work to find in the eighteenth-century swing towards French neoclassicism a psychological reaction to the triumphs of the authors of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, expressed as a growing consciousness of and anxiety towards previous achievements in the English vernacular canon.³⁹ Harold Bloom’s *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) famously went further, positing a canon of ‘strong poets, major figures with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death’

³⁷ Eliot, ‘Milton II’ in *Selected Prose*, p.265. For a similar present day opinion, see Clive James, ‘Poems of a Lifetime’, <<http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article1410176.ece>> [accessed 12th January 2015]

³⁸ See Leonard, *Faithful Labourers*, pp.169-251, for a detailed chronological examination of the controversy.

³⁹ Walter Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1970).

and a series of revisionary ratios by which such influences might be articulated.⁴⁰ He had no doubt ‘who among them ranks as the great Inhibitor, the Sphinx who strangles even strong imaginations in their cradles: [...] Milton is the central problem in any theory and history of poetic influence in English.’⁴¹ Though extremely influential, his work was disputed by critics interested in articulating a milder and more traditional notion of influence, and critics with a historicist interest in reading texts in the light of contemporaneous events and discourses, rather than following Bloom’s ‘hidden roads from poem to poem.’⁴² Even *The Anxiety of Influence* itself, despite its emphasis on the creativity that springs from direct confrontation with anxiety, seems genuinely disturbed by the consequences of its psychological argument:

So much of the mid-eighteenth century Sublime is subsumed by this anxiety of influence that we must wonder whether the revived Sublime was ever more than a compound of repression and the perverse celebration of loss, as though less could become more, through a continuity of regressiveness and self-deception. Yet more than the sublime transport of Thomson, Collins, Cowper is placed in jeopardy by our growing awareness. What of Blake’s Counter-Sublime, and Wordsworth’s?⁴³

Bloom leaves us with no answer to this perplexing question, and perhaps his particular approach gives us none.

The next book to attempt to review Milton’s eighteenth-century reputation was Dustin Griffin’s *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, which was also the first to attempt to combine reception and influence studies, the respective disciplines of Good and Havens. It opened with chapters on eighteenth-century readings of Milton’s politics, moral idealism and literary heroism, reviewed the literary and generic possibilities that Milton’s influence had produced, and concluded with separate examinations of Milton’s influence on the eighteenth century’s major writers. Griffin made a convincing case for writers finding

⁴⁰ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, New York: Oxford UP, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 5.

⁴¹ Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, pp. 32–33.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.96.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.111.

‘inspiration in Milton’s great myth of a lost garden of innocence, in his recurrent themes of freedom, choice and responsibility, his celebration of marriage, his defiant stance against his detractors’ and he moved beyond simply condemning the deficiencies of a turgid blank-verse style that afflicted the second-rate imitators of Milton.⁴⁴ However, Griffin’s reaction to the presentation of Milton as the great Inhibitor in *The Anxiety of Influence* was to argue that Milton’s influence on eighteenth-century writers was overwhelmingly creative, helpful and benign. I agree with those that argue that this is too rigid a position for a comprehensive critique to take, and one that unduly limited the scope of Griffin’s argument.⁴⁵

Tim Fulford’s *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: poetry, criticism and politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* also sets out to correct Bloom’s hypothesis:

By deliberately including aesthetic and critical writings in the discourses of landscape under investigation, I intend to show that poetic authority should not be understood as being produced simply by the struggle of a poet with his strong poetic predecessors. Harold Bloom’s theory of poetic influence tends to understand it in such terms and in so doing removes from the account the often vexed relationship between poetry and criticism, as well as that between poetry and the public realm with its competing political and social discourses. [...] The eighteenth-century landscape poem is not only seen as shaped (as I shall show of Cowper’s *The Task*) by emulation of and deference towards Milton, but also by absorption of discourses (poetic, critical, political) whose very instabilities made them attractive.⁴⁶

Fulford’s case for a broader view of influence that goes beyond Bloom’s linear transitions from strong poet to strong poet is well made, but his anti-Bloomianism also leads him into a resolute and not altogether convincing denial of any model of influence that is not benign and helpful. It is true, as Richard Terry points out, that Bloom’s ‘savage authorial individualism stands at a long remove from the Augustan’s own milder ways of conceiving the tradition,

⁴⁴ Dustin Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.2

⁴⁵ For an early review that expresses this opinion, see Steven Shankman, ‘Review: *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, by Dustin Griffin; *Coleridge’s Philosophy of Language*, by James C. McCusick,’ *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Autumn, 1990), 368-371.

⁴⁶ Tim Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 12.

through the strong metaphors pioneered by Dryden, those of creative geniture and metempsychosis', but it is also true that Bloom's work has largely moved away from debating the points that Griffin and Fulford most hotly contest.⁴⁷ His semi-sequel to his earlier work, *The Anatomy of Influence*, attempts to move his theories away from a psychological examination of the author and back to the text, arguing that 'influence anxiety exists between poems and not between persons. Temperament and circumstances determine whether a later poet *feels* anxiety at whatever level of consciousness. All that matters for interpretation is the revisionary relationship between poems.'⁴⁸ In this shift, he was following pathways already scouted out in advance by his more engaged critics. For instance, Lucy Newlyn, in *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader*, had already made the decision to 'side-step the question frequently asked in the wake of *The Anxiety of Influence* – namely, "did Milton really make his followers that anxious?" – for the simple reason that I think it the wrong question.'⁴⁹ Her analysis and her 'intention to *supplement* [Bloom's] analysis of individual creativity with a larger historical understanding of intra-poetic relations' have been useful in crafting my own approach to Milton's eighteenth-century successors, and their attempts to tame and come to terms with the spatial and poetical immensity of *Paradise Lost*.

I concur with Newlyn's conclusion that it is time we moved on from a binary approach to influence anxiety, and that the argument that it subsumes and excludes all other models of influence is looking as stale as the contrasting argument that anxiety has never troubled any poet worth talking of. Certainly, to try to locate a Bloomian anxiety in the stolid benevolence of John Dyer seems as thankless a task as to deny it completely in the tortured

⁴⁷ Richard Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past, 1660-1781* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 167–68. Dustin Griffin makes a similar point about Pope's metaphors for influence in *Regaining Paradise*, p.237.

⁴⁸ Harold Bloom, *The Anatomy of Influence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), p.6.

⁴⁹ Newlyn, *Romantic Reader*, p.14.

introspectiveness of William Cowper.⁵⁰ In my thesis I find anxiety theory useful for considering the poetry of John Philips, who was not only the first poet to model his career on Milton's, but also had to accommodate Milton's republican verse to his royalist beliefs in a manner helpfully illuminated by Bloom's model of a 'clinamen' or creative misreading. I find less evidence for psychological anxiety in most of the chapters that follow, but the idea of creative misreading remains a potent one throughout.

With scarcely breathing space given between the dying-down of the Milton controversy before the Influence controversy flared up, it is hardly surprising that several noted Miltonists have striven to avoid engaging with Bloom upon his own terms, or becoming bogged down in the contested fields of eighteenth-century poetry. Outlining his own theory of Milton's placement in a tradition of biblical prophecy he variously dubbed 'the line of vision' or 'visionary poetics', Joseph Anthony Wittreich overstepped the eighteenth century altogether, moving from Milton directly to Blake and the Romantic poets.⁵¹ Meanwhile, *Feminist Milton*, his contribution to the discussion of Milton's eighteenth-century influence, sidestepped the Bloomian debate by reviving influence studies with a new feminist twist.⁵² He produced a wide variety of evidence that the eighteenth-century female

⁵⁰ Belinda Humfrey begins her biography of Dyer in the *Writers of Wales* series by noting that he 'appears to have been that unattractive subject for an incipient biographer, a good man', and explicitly rejecting Ralph M. Williams's portrayal of him in an earlier biography as a man torn between a romantic poetical allegiance and a practical business sense. See Belinda Humfrey, *John Dyer* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980); Ralph M. Williams, *Poet, Painter and Parson: The Life of John Dyer* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1956). Lucy Newlyn, in *Romantic Reader* p.51-4, convincingly critiques Griffin's view that Cowper's discomfort in regard to *Paradise Lost* is thoroughly religious in basis and in no way affiliated with a poetic anxiety.

⁵¹ See Joseph Anthony Wittreich, *Visionary Poetics: Milton's Tradition and His Legacy* (San Marino, Calif: Huntington Library, 1979); *Milton and the Line of Vision*, ed. by Joseph Anthony Wittreich (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1975). A useful history of the critical mode is found in the introduction to Matthew Vickless, 'Apprehending George Dyer in Amicus Redivivus: Charles Lamb on Miltonic Visionary Poetics', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, n.s. 159 (2014), 20-32, p.20. For more work on the eighteenth-century visionary tradition, see Daniel P. Watkins, "History and Vision in Ann Yearsley's Rural Lyre," *The Age of Johnson*, 20, (2010), 223-95; and Daniel P. Watkins, *Anna Letitia Barbauld and Eighteenth-Century Visionary Poetics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), both of which feature in my fourth chapter.

⁵² Joseph Anthony Wittreich, *Feminist Milton* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University, 1987).

readers of Milton had found it a liberating poem. This was a stark contrast to the forbidding figure of twentieth-century feminist critique; in *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf famously urged women to 'look past Milton's bogey' in order to attain their own literary voice.⁵³ Wittreich's work has been critiqued in turn, but *Feminist Milton* remains a pivotal work and deserves to be celebrated for its reintroduction of whole generations of eighteenth-century women critics to modern critical attention, and the new ground it opened in Miltonic reception studies.⁵⁴ In my examination of women's astronomical and prospect poetry, I too come to the conclusion that Milton was largely a helpful poetic influence, providing a model for women to extend their vision beyond the limited scope allotted them by eighteenth-century society.

Another work that sidesteps the most contested areas of Milton's eighteenth-century reception is Joseph Crawford's *Raising Milton's Ghost*, which largely concerns itself with the Romanticism and the Gothic. However, one chapter does make a fascinating and original contribution to our understanding of Milton in the eighteenth century, when Crawford goes back and re-examines Milton's publishing catalogue in order to give the lie to many of the oft-mouthed scholarly assumptions that have lain unchallenged since Havens's days. Havens had airily declared that 'not only ploughboys and shepherd, but threshers, cotters, cobblers, and milkwomen read and imitated the poet who expected his audience to be few'; Wittreich, similarly had claimed that 'Milton was first and foremost the property of the popular culture.'⁵⁵ Crawford, meanwhile, isolates the labouring-class poets such as Robert Burns and

⁵³ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008). p.149

⁵⁴ Challengers to Wittreich's feminist interpretation history include David Booker, "'Women Are Indebted to Milton': Milton and Woman's Rights in the Nineteenth Century," in *Arenas of Conflict: Milton and the Unfettered Mind*, ed. by Kristin Pruitt McColgan and Charles W. Durham (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1997), pp. 51–64; and John Leonard, whose chapter 'Sex and the Sexes' in *Faithful Labourers*, pp.650-704, goes over much of the same ground with different conclusions.

⁵⁵ Havens, *Influence of Milton*, p.25; Wittreich, *Feminist Milton*, p.44.

Ann Yearsley as isolated examples and comes to the tentative conclusion that ‘unlike the genuinely universal *Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Paradise Lost* remained very much part of the cultural property of the educated classes during the eighteenth century.’⁵⁶ Crawford succeeds in dispelling the notion of Milton being universally read – fostered perhaps by the poet’s centrality to so many discourses across the eighteenth century—and restores Milton to his largely middle-class readership. For these educated readers, he goes on to argue, Milton himself was chiefly a religious poet: a sage whose poems were removed from the context of the polemical prose and admired from afar. He was a distant idol, ‘very grand, and very holy and very, very dead.’⁵⁷

It would be easy to quarrel with this conclusion, which fits a little too neatly with Crawford’s conceit of his book as a ghost story: he needs to produce the desiccated corpse of the eighteenth-century Milton, in order that the uncanny spectre of the Romantic Milton may return in the Age of Revolution, perplexing poets and shedding disastrous twilight over nations. Lucy Newlyn found much to remark in the apotheosis of Milton into an avatar of his own sublimity, and given his importance (well attested by Griffin, Havens and Wittreich) to discourses as diverse as politics, gender relations, and landscape gardening, it seems perverse to suddenly demote him to a saintly relic. Nevertheless, Crawford’s dissection of our idealised view of Milton’s eighteenth-century readership retains its force.

Two recent works deserve mention. Philip Connell’s *Secular Chains: Poetry and the Politics of Religion from Milton to Pope* examines the intertwined discourse of science and religion—or physico-theology, as he terms it—across the late seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. From a critical perspective that owes more to the history of ideas than of poetic influence, Connell studies ‘the complex and ambivalent status of poetic discourse

⁵⁶ Crawford, *Raising Milton’s Ghost*, p.9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.12.

within the arguments of Enlightenment free-thought.⁵⁸ His work informs my discussion of James Thomson's debts to both science and Milton, and illuminates the physico-theological underpinnings of Elizabeth Singer Rowe's poetry. Connell does much to make possible a study of how the scientific and philosophical concepts of the day were expressed through a language adapted from Milton's poetry, along the lines of Isabel Rivers's two-volume *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A study of the language of religion and ethics in England, 1660-1780*. This is not a path my thesis takes, however, and the truncation of Connell's temporal scope prevents me from using him extensively.

I also make use of several essays from the recent collection *Milton in the Long Restoration*, which provides useful insights into many seventeenth and eighteenth-century authors and critics, but which does not give its authors enough range for the concept of a Long Restoration, largely unaddressed in the volume, to truly cohere.⁵⁹ Hence, my engagement with this volume is piecemeal, rather than guided by a unitary concept.

T.S. Eliot and Harold Bloom are the critics who articulate the most controversial and influential ideas of Milton. While Eliot denigrates the epic poet and Bloom exalts him, both see him as problematic. For Eliot, Milton constitutes the problem; for Bloom, the problem is in the mind of his successor poets. Unlike the surveys by Griffin and Fulford, who have a less fraught notion of this kind of creativity, I too am interested in the problems Milton posed for eighteenth-century writers, particularly the problem of how to respond to the scale and comprehensiveness of his cosmographic poetry. This aspect of the poem's achievement was noted by one of the first poets to respond to *Paradise Lost*, Samuel Barrow, whose Latin

⁵⁸ Philip Connell, *Secular Chains: Poetry and the Politics of Religion from Milton to Pope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 14.

⁵⁹ The only essay that really engages with the concept of the Long Restoration is Steven Pincus's 'Some thoughts of Periodization: John Milton to Adam Smith and Beyond', which is notably ambivalent about the proposed category. See *Milton in the Long Restoration*, ed. Blair Hoxby and Ann Baynes Cairo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

verses for the second edition of the poem declare, ‘This book contains all things, and the beginnings of all things, and their fates and ultimate ends.’⁶⁰ It was against this kind of ambition and achievement that the poets of the eighteenth century would ultimately be judged, as they engaged with the spaces and places described in Milton’s verse in order to describe the world as they viewed and experienced it. If I retain a sense of Milton posing a problem for eighteenth-century writers, I am also interested in the creativity and ingenuity of the solutions they devised, however alien to modern-day poetic tastes such solutions may seem.

My early chapters explore the idea of remapping through the poetry of John Philips, John Dyer and James Thomson, three writers interested in transforming Milton’s epic material into a georgic vision of England and the world beyond. Reading Philips and Dyer’s poetry alongside contemporary maps and applying the post-modern critique of cartography as systems of power, I examine how these poems rewrite and update Milton’s poetry to accommodate it to a chorographic and geographic scale, which can more fittingly convey the imperial and scientific concerns of Enlightenment Britain.

This carries through into my examination of Thomson’s *The Seasons*, where I adopt the methods of the digital humanities to produce my own maps, displaying how Thomson attempts to harmonise and integrate the landscape he surveys through visual strategies such as the prospect view and the excursion. Across the various books of Thomson’s poem, I chart a diminishing of scale from the national to the global. The purely local prospect from Richmond Hill in *Spring* can be accomplished by the human eye, then applied to the nation beyond as a model of prosperity replicated to the horizon’s bounds and beyond. However, the expedition across the Arctic in *Winter* and the grand hydrological survey of the globe in

⁶⁰ Samuel Barrow ‘In Paradisum Amissam’ in *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alistair Fowler, (Longman: London and New York, 1998), p.52.

Autumn can only be accomplished by calling on the authority not merely of Thomson's Milton-inflected muse, but also of eighteenth-century travel literature and of hydrological science.

In my third chapter, I contrast the cosmographic spaces of *Paradise Lost* with the importance of place to *A Mask Performed at Ludlow Castle*, an intimate drama designed to be performed in a single place on a single occasion. Any adaptation of *A Mask* must necessarily begin with a transposition of the text into a new location, as the original unrecoverable performance at Ludlow Castle is deeply entwined into the text itself, particularly in its opening and closing passages. During the eighteenth century, the masque was successively adapted into an opera, a play and a novel, with each adaptation necessarily altering the place, or setting, of the text in the process. These transpositions transform the original masque's use of the Welsh/English border into a variety of different fault-lines between British and Italian musical traditions; high art and low entertainment; and Welsh pastoral innocence and English aristocratic corruption. I examine how these three adaptations not only transform Milton's work into different settings but also interact with one another, with the play implicitly criticising the textual license of the opera, and the novel criticising the empty spectacle of the play.

While my earlier chapters examine the spatial authority of the male poet who seeks to achieve an equal, wide survey on a variety of scales, my later chapters examine the placial and spatial authority of the female poet. Relegated by eighteenth-century gender ideology to the domestic sphere, women were able to use Milton's poetic influence as an endorsement to write adventurous poetry from retirement. I trace a female tradition of poetry that mingles astronomy with religious devotion across the works of Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Elizabeth Carter and Anna Letitia Barbauld, who write poems where the inspired female author rises from the domestic sphere to take in the wonders of the universe. This devotional sublime is

contrasted with the domestic burlesque, a tradition which exploits the inherent possibility of bathos in Miltonic imitation by inflating an account of the mundane struggles of everyday life with a bombastic Miltonic rhetoric. In the poem 'Washing-Day', Barbauld's intermingling of the celebrated exploits of the eighteenth-century balloonists with the image of a child blowing bubbles is a bravura set-piece that both embodies and subtly critiques this notion of the burlesque.

My final chapter argues that when the late eighteenth-century writers Ann Yearsley and Charlotte Smith adopt the form of the prospect poem, they reverse many of the verse strategies used by Thomson. Their poems highlight the marginality and outsider status of their authors rather than producing a harmonised picture of Britain and the world. The success of their survey depends not on a versification of historical and scientific discourse, but on the personal forces of sympathy and memory. Finally, a coda examines the role of William Wordsworth, both as the teleological end-point of the eighteenth-century poetic tradition and as a poet who transfers the Miltonic sublime back onto the chorographical, local scale.

My survey of Milton's eighteenth-century influence follows the confines of the century in a way that may seem old-fashioned to those who have become accustomed to a Long Eighteenth Century beginning with the Restoration of King Charles II or the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and concluding with the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 or the First Great Reform Act in 1832. In fact, the hundred years between 1700 and 1800 form a very convenient unit for the study of Miltonic influence, beginning with John Philips's 'The Splendid Shilling' of 1701, and concluding with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1799, at the point where the influence of William Wordsworth ceases to be felt only amongst a small coterie, and becomes a matter of national attention.

In between these two dates the grand edifice of Milton's critical reputation rises. After the initial revilement of his radical republicanism, he comes to stand beside Shakespeare as the national poet of Britain, and his poetry is a major influence, not only on the poetry of the eighteenth century, but also on its prose and its aesthetics. That we still have not fully reconstructed and understood his eighteenth-century reputation is to our cost as literary critics. Milton's eighteenth-century readers could see continuities where we have been accustomed to see divisions, as in the ease with which they brought Milton's astronomy into harmony with the post-Newtonian view of the universe. Conversely, as with the colonial repurposing of Milton's geography, they could alter Milton's public image that now seems alien to the poet's original purpose. A reconsideration of Milton's eighteenth-century presence is a vital part not only of understanding the eighteenth-century worldview, but also of distinguishing Milton himself from what the eighteenth century made of him.

Chapter 1: A Cartography of Influence?

This chapter attempts to articulate – or perhaps to plot – a cartographical model of Miltonic influence upon eighteenth-century georgic poetry. It examines how the universal scope of Milton's cosmographic epic interacts with the two most accomplished poems in the tradition of the eighteenth-century georgic: John Philips's evocation of Herefordshire as a self-sufficient Edenic landscape in *Cyder* (1708) and John Dyer's celebration of the worldwide imperial reach of the British wool trade in *The Fleece* (1757). *Cyder*, I argue, can be profitably co-read alongside the tradition of county mapping, while *The Fleece* recasts Miltonic geography as a commercial atlas, recentering Britain at the heart of a circulatory system of international trade.

The first work to use cartography as a tool of literary analysis was Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel*. By plotting the courses of events and characters from various novels, Moretti argued for the usefulness of maps in literary criticism for their ability to

highlight the *ortgebunden*, place-bound nature of literary forms, each with its peculiar geometry, its boundaries, its spatial taboos and favourite routes. And then, maps bring to light the internal logic of narrative: the semiotic domain around which a plot coalesces and self-organises.¹

It is hard to think of a more intimately place-bound form than the georgic poem, which not only evokes landscape through description but also offers didactic advice on how to utilise and modify those surroundings to produce a fertile and flourishing system of agriculture. Aside from the occasional inset narrative, however, the georgic is largely plotless. Whereas the novel's 'internal logic of narrative' may be plotted as a series of events and encounters between differentiated characters, georgic poetry lacks a protagonist and describes an abstracted course of labour through to its endpoint, whether that be cider production or sheep-shearing.

¹ Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel: 1800-1900* (London; New York: Verso, 1998), p.5.

Perhaps a more profitable way of examining the georgic relation to place, therefore, is to move in the opposite direction to Moretti's analysis. An alternative way of conducting a cartographical analysis of the relationship between poetry and place is to read a poem alongside a contemporary map of the same area, examining what contemporary map-making tells us about literary texts and their evocation of place, rather than what we can glean from texts by mapping their incidents. This examination of 'the spatial re-visions that maps both initiated and recorded' springs from a postmodern geographical interest in deconstructive readings of maps, where artefacts that had previously seemed neutral and apolitical are recognised as being just as accommodating a vehicle for the conveyance of power relations and ideology as any literary text.² Profitable experiments in reading literary cartography in this light include Bernhard Klein's *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England*, and the collection of essays he co-edited with Andrew Gordon, *Literature, Mapping and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*.³ The chronological scope of Klein's work, however, concludes with Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1622) and this adumbrates the lack of literary-geographical criticism relating to the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To date, literary cartography is essentially divided between a study of the Renaissance period and the study of the Romantic period and the present day.⁴

² Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland* (Basingstoke : Palgrave, 2001), p.xx.

³ For an alternative analysis that reads Renaissance literature from the point of view of the history of cartography, see Victor Morgan, 'The Literary Image of Globes and Maps in Early Modern England', in *English Map-Making 1500-1650*, ed. by Sarah Tyacke (London: The British Library, 1983), pp. 46–56.

⁴ This renaissance/romantic split is also prominent in the geographical criticism of the nineties such as John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and Michael Wiley, *Romantic Geography: William Wordsworth and Anglo-European Spaces* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1998). A recent engagement with the digital humanities in Romantic criticism has led to a renewed interest in mapping the poem, in projects such as Damian Walford Davies's attempt to read the composition of Wordsworth's 'Lines written above Tintern Abbey' alongside the tide times for 1795, or the ongoing project to create a deep map of the Lake District that maps literary responses to landscape across a broad timescale. See Davies, *Cartographies of Culture: new geographies of Welsh writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales press, 2012);

There is a simple reason for this: from the end of the Jacobean period until after the Battle of Culloden, the British Isles entered something of a cartographic dark age. No new national surveys were done to supersede the pioneering work of Christopher Saxton, the Elizabethan surveyor and mapmaker, and ‘little was done to improve the cartographical depiction of individual English counties, either through re-surveying or the re-design of the face of the map’.⁵ Even the Civil War failed to provoke a demand for a new and more accurate national cartography.⁶ Only Jonas Moore’s rare *Map of the Fenlands* (1658) provided an example of republican cartography under the Commonwealth, and while the underlying cartography remained sound, the coats of arms and heraldic details that embossed its margins had to be swiftly changed after the Restoration.⁷ ‘At a time when the estate surveyors in Herefordshire and elsewhere were in their prime [...] producing exact and beautifully drawn large-scale maps,’ Brian Smith fulminates, ‘the printed county maps were unimaginative and often increasingly inaccurate representations of the county as it had appeared in Elizabeth I’s reign.’⁸ Consequently, as David A. Woodward summarises, ‘the century 1650-1750 was not a major period in English cartography’, and literary cartography has left it almost untouched.⁹ Yet images of the map were leaving the expensive atlases and

Ian Gregory and Christopher Donaldson, ‘Geographical Text Analysis: Digital Cartographies of Lake District Literature’, in *Literary Mapping in the Digital Age*, ed. by David Cooper, Christopher Donaldson, and Patricia Murrieta-Flores (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); and the project website ‘Geospatial Innovation in the Digital Humanities: A Deep Map of the Lake District’ <<http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/lakesdeepmap/>> [accessed 31 January 2017].

⁵ Catherine Delano-Smith, *English Maps: A History*, ed. by Roger J. P. Kain (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁶ A reprinted version of Saxton’s map, shorn of the royal seal and other heraldic material, known as the Quartermaster’s Map, was used by both sides in the Civil War. See Richard Helgerson, ‘The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography, and Subversion in Renaissance England’, *Representations*, 16.16 (1986), 50–85 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2928513>> pp.51-2.

⁷ Frances Willmoth, *Sir Jonas Moore: Practical Mathematics and Restoration Science* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993), p.115.

⁸ Brian Smith, *Herefordshire Maps 1577-1800* (Herefordshire: Logaston Press, 2004). p.24.

⁹ David A. Woodward, ‘English Cartography 1650-1750: A Summary’, in *The Compleat Plattmaker. Essays on Chart, Map and Globe Making in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by Norman J. Thrower (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), p.192.

taking on a whole range of decorative roles across society; Catherine Delano-Smith points out that ‘Maps were printed on silk for use on screens or as handkerchiefs, were embroidered, were customized to incorporate the owner’s genealogy, were displayed on study and library walls as a status symbol, and were embossed on the reverse of the great seal of the Commonwealth of England and on medals in general.’¹⁰ To these high cultural artifacts, we might add that they had also been present on the backs of playing cards since 1590, and frequently scaled down into affordable pocket editions, often with extracts from a topographical work such as William Camden’s *Britannia*.¹¹ Though the image of the nation they presented had barely changed in a century, maps in the Commonwealth and Restoration periods had never been more visible, or more available, both within the libraries of learned and wealthy families and in popular print culture. Print atlases and terrestrial globes were geographical tools considered vital to the education of intelligent university men such as John Milton and his great admirer and imitator, John Philips, for whom they would have been one of the chief ways of conceiving the world.

Milton and Geography

John Milton’s own engagement with seventeenth-century geography and cartography is indisputable, and can be traced as early as his university exercises; in his seventh academic prolusion, he exclaims ‘what delight it affords to the mind to take its flight through the history and geography of every nation’.¹² In his treatise *On Education*, he recommended that

¹⁰ Delano-Smith, *English Maps*, p. 76. It is also worth noting that the famous *Klencke Atlas*, at the time (and for some 350 years after) the world’s largest book, was a coronation present to King Charles II in 1660. The atlas is now on display at the entrance to the Map Reading Room at the British Library.

¹¹ In Cardiff’s SCOLAR collection is a small box containing the 1676 pack *The 52 Counties of England and Wales, Geographically described in a pack of Cards*. Herefordshire is the King of Diamonds, who bears a noted resemblance to Charles II.

¹² John Milton, ‘Prolusion VII, Delivered in the College chapel in defence of learning, an oration’ in *CPW* I, 297

the ideal student should know ‘the use of the Globes, and all the maps first with the old names; and then with the new’; when compiling his *History of Moscovia*, he added a prefatory pronouncement that ‘The study of Geography is both profitable and delightful’; and finally his late letter to Peter Heimbach complains of the price of a contemporary atlas despite the fact that he had at this point been blind for many years.¹³ *Paradise Lost*, however, deals in the broader discipline of cosmography, of which astronomy and geography are the constituent parts.¹⁴

A recent article by Morgan Ng entitled ‘Milton’s Maps’ examines in detail the poet’s engagement with cartography in *Paradise Lost*, arguing persuasively for a visualization of Eden in terms of both a religious cartographical tradition initiated by John Calvin and in the contemporary art of estate surveying. However, his opening assertion that ‘Any literate Englishman of the seventeenth century would have instantly recognized the inaugural view of terrestrial creation in *Paradise Lost* as the poetic analog of a biblical map’ stumbles over a common misreading.¹⁵ The passage Ng quotes in support of this statement, wherein Satan ‘Looks down with wonder at the sudden view / Of all this world at once’ (*PL* III. 541-2) is one of those in which ‘world’ is used by Milton to refer to the stellar universe rather than the Earth. Satan’s vision takes in the breadth of the stellar universe ‘from eastern point / Of Libra

¹³ John Milton, *Of Education* in *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. by Don M. Wolfe et al., 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953-81) Vol. II, p. 389 (I concur with the gloss in the footnotes, which argues that in using the plural form ‘Globes’, Milton refers to both the terrestrial and the celestial kind); Milton, *A Brief History of Muscovia* in *CPW* VIII 474-5; Milton to Peter Heimbach, November 8 1656, *CPW* VII, 494-5.

¹⁴ In actual cartographical practice, the disciplinary boundary between geography and cosmography was not sharply defined. For example, an otherwise clearly geographical work such as the *Atlas Maritimus & Commercialis* (which is discussed later in this chapter) might be considered as cosmographic because of the inclusion of two star charts. However, the absence of lines of latitude and longitude from Christopher Saxton’s *Atlas of England and Wales* makes it authoritatively not a cosmography. See Adam Mosely, ‘The Cosmographer’s Role in the Sixteenth Century: A Preliminary Study’, *Archives Internationales d’Histoire Des Sciences*, 59 (2009), 423–39. I am grateful to Dr Mosely for elucidating the history of cosmography in conversation with me at The Huntington Library, Los Angeles.

¹⁵ Morgan Ng, ‘Milton’s Maps’, *Word and Image*, 29:4 (2013), 428–42 (p. 428).

to the fleecy star that bears / Andromeda far off Atlantic seas / Beyond the horizon' (*PL* III. 557-60), not the familiar locations of biblical geography. At this crucial point in the poem, to replace the awesomeness of cosmographical sublime with the reassuring certainties of a map would be to repeat the inherent bathos of David Masson's 'Diagram of the Cosmic Infinitude', which reduces Milton's universe to a few circles and lines. The map is an excellent tool for reducing spatial and temporal dimensions into a comprehensible symbolic medium, but it is not well-adapted to conveying a sublime experience.

The closest analogue to the adversary's perspective in this passage is not a map, but an instrument: the celestial globe. The astronomical counterparts to their terrestrial fellows, the convex shape of the celestial globe meant they displayed the inverse of the astronomer's concave experience of the night sky. As, when using the terrestrial globe, the geographer is mimicking an extraterrestrial perspective of the Earth, so when using a celestial globe, the astronomer is placing himself as outside of the cosmos, where the Earth itself is an implicit point at the sphere's centre. This is acknowledged by the visual convention whereby all the constellations on the celestial globe have their back to the user: they are being seen from behind, rather than in front.¹⁶

In fact, while *Paradise Lost* is working on the larger, cosmographic scale of Satan's journey from Hell to Eden, it works hard to make us visualize the various celestial and terrestrial spheres. In Book III, when the scene switches from the conference in Heaven to Satan's arrival on the borders of the universe, the spherical cosmogony is insisted upon no less than six times in seven lines:

Thus they in heaven, above the starry *sphere*,
 Their happy hours in joy and hymning spent.
 Meanwhile upon the firm opacous *globe*

¹⁶ For the history of this convention, see Sylvia Sumira's *The Art and History of Globes* (London: British Library, 2014), p.17, together with its many excellent photographs of historic celestial and terrestrial globes.

Of this *round* world, whose first convex divides
The luminous inferior *orbs*, enclosed
From Chaos and the inroad of darkness old,
Satan alighted walks: a *globe* far off
It seemed, now seems a boundless continent
(*PL* III. 416-22, italics mine)

Again, ‘World’ here is used in the same sense as when Milton spoke earlier of ‘This pendant world in bigness as a star / Of smallest magnitude close by the moon’ (*PL* II. 1052-3), to mean something like what we would call ‘the universe’, a sphere which contains the Earth, Sun, stars and constellations, and which is distinct both from Heaven and from Chaos. In this passage, Satan has left the unbounded spaces of Chaos behind him, and landed upon the outside surface of the celestial sphere. If it is sometimes difficult for the reader to keep track of the Earth itself amid all these different orbs and worlds, it is equally difficult for Satan, who finds himself so disorientated that he must land on the sun and inquire for directions from the angel Uriel. The difficulty of locating the Earth in the vast globe of the newly created stellar universe, containing within itself the vast spheres of innumerable stars and planets, embodies a sense of awe and terror at the scale of God’s universe—the cosmographical sublime.

Even while *Paradise Lost* is describing events on the Earth, Milton sustains this cosmographic perspective by describing the planet as a geometric globe rather than a geographical map. When Satan returns to Eden at the beginning of Book IX, it is after having circumnavigated ‘thrice the equinoctial line’ and having ‘four times crossed the car of Night / From pole to pole, traversing each colure’ (*PL* XI. 64-6), describing his journey through spherical geometry rather than geographical features. It is only when Adam and the angel Gabriel ascend the mountain in Book XI that a more cartographical perspective of the various lands and continents makes its appearance. Clearly Milton, like Satan, was accustomed to viewing his universe from the outside, and I would argue that his cosmology encourages us to think of his universe in terms of sublime spheres in order to develop our understanding and

comprehension of the Earth as a globe: something which prior to the development of space exploration could only be an artistic or imaginative act. This was particularly true during the controversy between the geocentric and heliocentric world systems that was a feature of Milton's day; according to Dennis Danielson, 'The imaginative effort to view Earth from the heavens became one of the most characteristic thought experiments of the seventeenth century.'¹⁷ Taking a broader historical view Denis Cosgrove argues in *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* that the vehicle of cosmographical sublimity has been the globe, which he describes as 'a figure of enormous imaginative power; until 1968 "seeing" the spherical earth meant imagining or picturing it, an activity often inseparable from visionary experience.'¹⁸ The visionary view of the globe embodies the cosmographical sublime, which Cosgrove defines with reference to Milton as a viewpoint where 'human existence and agency, when set in Apollonian perspective against the vastness of global space, are petty and insignificant, subsumed by the greatness of "nature".'¹⁹ The pettiness and insignificance of humanity on the cosmic scale would present a problem for all poets who would follow in Milton's footsteps, whether like Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Elizabeth Carter or Anna Letitia Barbauld, they wished to write poetry that explored the cosmos without being reduced to abject self-negation, or whether like Philips, Dyer and Thomson they sought to celebrate Britain's achievements on a chorographic or geographic scale.

Appropriately for a poem which will not reveal whether the Sun, the Earth, or neither body is at the centre of the universe, Milton's cosmographic perspective rejects Anglo-centric or Euro-centric geography in favour of a global perspective that has no fixed central point.

¹⁷ Danielson, p. 20.

¹⁸ Denis Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore, MA: The John Hopkins Press, 2003), p.3.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.7

Many critics have noted Milton's use of colonial images and rhetoric within the poem, and attributed to Milton varying degrees of complicity with seventeenth-century English imperialism, but the prevalence of this cosmographic sublime means that the poem never embodies a sustained colonial perspective. To describe the poem as an imperial archive, as Bruce McLeod does, is to confront the problem that the poem never mentions Britain as a geographical entity and never describes a colonial geography, with its web-like relationship between the central home country and the radial colonies. For both John Philips and John Dyer, this was an omission to be remedied, and their poetry rewrites Milton's ambivalence towards colonial endeavor as wholesale endorsement, though only Dyer goes so far as to develop a fully fledged colonial geography. Their work can be read as a poetic remapping that reduces Milton's cosmographic perspectives to the scale of the county map and the commercial atlas, eliminating in the process the problematic cosmographic sublime.²⁰ John Philips's *Cyder*, which provides the most extreme example of the narrowed chorographical perspective, centers on the county of Herefordshire, with only brief references to the rest of England and Wales, and still fewer to England's continental neighbours. Meanwhile John Dyer's *The Fleece* proceeds beyond instructions for the care of sheep to achieve a world-spanning view that is *globalized* rather than global, presenting a network of trading links and commercial influence rather than the abstract geometry that characterises Milton's spatial sublime.

Cyder, Paradise Lost and the mapping of Herefordshire.

Cyder (1708) is the final work of John Philips, who died of tuberculosis the year after the poem's completion, aged thirty-two. He had planned to follow up his georgic work with a poem on the Day of Resurrection, completing his movement from his early burlesque poetry

²⁰ Bernhard Klein makes similar distinctions in *Maps and the Writing of Space*, p.137-9.

to a wholly serious subject, but his ill-health makes it unlikely any of it was drafted.²¹ If he was not the first direct imitator of Milton, Philips deserves the title of the first poet to model his career on Milton's own. From 'The Splendid Shilling' (1701) to *Blenheim* (1705) to *Cyder*, Philips built his career on a Miltonic blank verse style, to the extent that his epitaph in Westminster Abbey describes him as 'Miltono Secundus'.

This close sympathy with Milton was mediated by the incompatibility of their political beliefs. Philips was an ardent Royalist and Tory from a family of provincial clergy. Unlike Milton, who left Cambridge under some sort of cloud and spent much of his life in London, Philips remained comfortable in the surroundings of Christ Church, Oxford, amongst a like-minded political set. He never sought or was granted a place among the London-centric literary coteries of his day, and his defiant provincialism is displayed in his longest poem, on the subject of cider-making in Herefordshire. With typical georgic inclusiveness, it digresses so far as to incorporate the Act of Union between Scotland and England, the aftermath of the civil wars, and Britain's foreign policy, but Herefordshire remains at the centre both of the poem and of the nation it describes.

Cyder opens with a short blank verse paragraph which seems intentionally modest in comparison to the twenty-six line first sentence of *Paradise Lost*.

What Soil the Apple loves, what care is due
To Orchats, timeliest when to press the Fruits,
Thy Gift, Pomona, in Miltonian Verse
Adventrous I presume to sing; of Verse
Nor skill'd, nor studious: But my Native Soil
Invites me, and the Theme as yet unsung.²²

²¹ See J. C. Pellicer, 'John Philips (1676-1709): Life, Works. and Reception' (PhD thesis: University of Oslo, 2002), p.98.

²² John Philips, *Cyder. A Poem in Two Books*, ed. by J. Goodridge and J. C. Pellicer (Cheltenham: Cyder Press, 2001) Bk I. ll. 1-6. All further references to *Cyder* will be taken from this edition and given parenthetically in the body of the thesis.

This very un-Miltonic note of humility introduces a poem whose central paradox is that it is at once original and derivative. Taking its structure from Virgil and its versification from Milton, it synthesises a new subgenre with no less success than Philips's original creation of the Miltonic burlesque poem in 'The Splendid Shilling' (1701). Juan Christian Pellicer describes the paradox succinctly when he writes that 'Philips is a derivative writer – thoroughly, deeply, and creatively', and the triad aptly evokes the scope and complexity of Philips's techniques of poetic allusion.²³ One frequent critical approach to Philips's works is to highlight and explicate the hundreds of instances of borrowings, paraphrases and direct quotations from Virgil and Milton which the poems contain. This form was already highly developed in Charles Dunster's pioneering (and still useful) critical edition of *Cyder* from 1791, with its long footnotes containing lengthy extracts from parallel passages.²⁴ More recent editions of the poem, such as M.G. Lloyd Thomas's 1927 edition of *The Poems of John Philips*, and the 2001 edition of *Cyder*, edited by J.C. Pellicer and John Goodridge, have chosen to reduce this level of editorial intervention, only marking Philips's borrowings where they make direct reference to the events of *Paradise Lost* rather than merely echoing its language.²⁵ In criticism, meanwhile, Philips occupies an important place in the history described by Raymond Dexter Havens in *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (1922), a work which is still the most complete overview of the minor poetry of the period.²⁶ The models of poetic influence that Harold Bloom proposed in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1975), which divides authors into major poets who break free of the influence of their forebears and minor poets who abide in their shadow, led to fresh interest in the examination of Philips's

²³ J. C. Pellicer, 'John Philips (1676-1709): Life, Works. and Reception' (PhD thesis: University of Oslo, 2002), p.9

²⁴ John Philips, *Cider, A Poem, in Two Books, by John Philips, With Notes, Provincial, Historical, and Classical*, ed. by Charles Dunster (London, 1791).

²⁵ M.G. Lloyd Thomas, *The Poems of John Philips* (Oxford, 1927); Philips, *Cyder*.

²⁶ Raymond Dexter Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (Cambridge, & London: Harvard University Press, & Oxford University Press, 1922).

indebtedness to Milton. Dustin Griffin's *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the eighteenth century* (1986) attempts to reject Bloom wholesale, arguing that Milton's influence on Philips was entirely beneficial, while J. C. Pellicer's PhD thesis 'John Philips (1676—1709): Life, Works, Reception' (2002) takes a more balanced approach, arguing that Philips's occasionally fraught relationship with Milton is a deliberate and valid artistic choice.²⁷

A divergent, though closely related line of criticism is interested in ideas of hybridity and inter-relation in *Cyder*, a poem which combines and synthesises a variety of traditions. Intermixing Virgilian form and Miltonic style and drawing upon other English verse traditions such as the country house or prospect poem, Philips's botanical discussion of grafting leads to an endorsement of the political union between Scotland and England in the 1707 act of Union.²⁸ In his eco-critical readings of georgic poetry David Fairer characterises this hybridity of form in terms of one of Philips's own images, that of grafting, or joining a branch from one tree to the body of another in order to produce a superior fruit. In his formulation, Philips 'exploits the organic character of the georgic by engrafting it onto its native siblings, the English 'country-house' poem [...] and the prospect poem, [...] landscape

²⁷ Dustin Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) (and an article by the same author, 'The Bard of Cyder-Land: John Philips and Miltonic Imitation', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 1984, 441–60); J. C. Pellicer 'Life, Works, Reception'. Pellicer expands on Havens and Griffin to provide the most thorough examination and categorization of the different kinds of Miltonic reference in Philips's works, though his scope is not limited to this: hence the citation of his articles on Philips and contemporary politics below.

²⁸ In addition to the articles cited below, one might consult J. C. Pellicer, 'Celebrating Queen Anne and the Union of 1707 in Great Britain's First Georgic', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37.2 (2014), 217–27 and J. C. Pellicer, 'Harleian Georgic from Tonson's Press: The Publication of John Philips's "Cyder", 29 January 1708', *Library*, 7.2 (2006), 185–98. Kevin L. Cope's study of reader entrapment in Philips's work has failed to gain much critical traction, perhaps partly due to his erroneous ascription to Philips of Elijah Fenton's *Ceralia* (1708). See Kevin L. Cope, 'When the Past Presses the Present: Shillings, Cyders, Malts and Wines', in *Reader Entrapment in 18th-Century Literature*, ed. by Carl R Kropf (New York: AMS Press, 1992) and cf. Pellicer, 'Life, Works, Reception' p.19. His return to the subject of John Philips in the conclusion to a recent volume of critical essays, where he considers *Cyder* in an eco-critical light, is a less idiosyncratic work: see Kevin L. Cope, 'Conclusion: The Coziness of Crisis: The Invigorating Enlightenment Art of Adapting to Almost Anything', in *Citizens of the World: Adapting in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Kevin L. Cope and Samara Anne Cahill (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2015), pp. 127–50.

economies that explore geo-historical continuities and disruptions.’²⁹ The organic metaphor struggles here with the ‘engrafting’ of one landscape economy upon another, concealing to some degree those continuities and disruptions in the representation of landscape that Philips has considered and negotiated. On the other hand, to suggest as Alastair Fowler does that ‘John Philips’s *Cyder* is like an estate poem on a national scale’ is to overstate the matter; the scale is much smaller than this.³⁰ *Cyder* is written on the scale of Philips’s home county, and use of chorographic scale underlies the poem’s use of perspective as well as its ‘Country Tory’ politics. When Philips writes ‘my Native Soil / Invites me’, he signals the accurate knowledge of Herefordshire’s history, landscape and antiquities which underpins the poem, giving it, in the estimation of Samuel Johnson, one of its claims to greatness.³¹

The county of Herefordshire was first mapped by Christopher Saxton in *An Atlas of England and Wales*, published in 1579.³² This map formed the basis of all subsequent maps of the county until Isaac Taylor’s *New Map of the County of Hereford* in 1754.³³ It is fair to say that John Philips, as an educated Oxford graduate from a good family, would have been familiar with at least one version of this map though, as with John Milton, we lack the

²⁹ David Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century, 1700-1789* (London: Longman, 2003), p.93. See also Fairer, “‘Where Fuming Trees Refresh the Thirsty Air’: The World of Eco-Georgic”, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 40 (2011), 201–18; and Fairer, “‘All Manag’d for the Best’: Ecology and the Dynamics of Adaptation”, in *Citizens of the World: Adapting in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Bucknell University Press, 2015).

³⁰ Alastair Fowler, ‘Introduction’ to *The Country House Poem : A Cabinet of Seventeenth-Century Estate Poems and Related Items*, ed. by Alastair Fowler (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p.21. See also Virginia C Kenny, *The Country House Ethos in English Literature, 1688-1750 : Themes of Personal Retreat and National Expansion* (Brighton : Harvester, 1984). p.65-77

³¹ Johnson accorded to *Cyder* the praise ‘that it is grounded in truth; that the precepts which it contains are exact and just; and that it is therefore, at once, a book of entertainment and of science.’ Samuel Johnson, ‘John Philips’ in *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations on Their Works*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006). Vol. II p.69-70

³² Christopher Saxton, *An Atlas of England and Wales* (London, 1579). For a full account of the publication history of Saxton’s plates, see Sarah Tyacke and John Huddy, *Christopher Saxton and Tudor Map-Making* (London: British Library, 1980), pp. 36–39.

³³ Here and for much of the information that follows, I am indebted to Brian Smith’s definitive *Herefordshire Maps: 1577 to 1800*.

historical knowledge to be able to tie him to a particular edition of Saxton's Atlas. Cartographical influences in the works of writers are harder to trace than literary ones, because the well-theorised technique of echo and allusion do not span the forms. However, looking on the version of Saxton's map that was published in 1689 in Philip Lea's *All the Shires of England and Wales*, it is striking how many of Philip's own concerns and subjects are already here. The affiliation between Herefordshire and Eden, often attributed to John Philips's take on Milton's characterization of Eden as 'a happy rural seat of various view' (*PL* IV. 247), has in fact been present from 1577, when Christopher Saxton used Adam and Eve to frame the map's title caption. Somewhat quaintly attired in chastity belts, Eve, on the right hand pillar of the tablet, holds out the fatal apple towards Adam, who reaches out to take it. Over a century before John Philips began to write *Cyder*—at a time, indeed, when Shakespeare had yet to write the famous speech that refers to England as 'this other Eden, demi-Paradise' – the bountiful orchards and fertile landscapes of Hereford are already being viewed as Edenic.³⁴

³⁴ William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. by Charles R Forker (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002), II. I. 42. Scholarly consensus dates the play to 1595.



Figure 1. Title caption from Christopher Saxton's *Atlas of England and Wales* (1577).



Figure 2. Title caption from Philip Lea's *All the Shires of England and Wales* (1689).

Early on in the poem, Philips reflects upon the appropriate site and soil for an orchard, and the list of possible locations that follows mingles the estates of his friends with genuine Herefordshire place-names plottable on the Lea map.

Such is the *Kentchurch*, such *Dantzeyan* Ground,
 Such thine, O learned *Brome*, and *Capel* such,
Willisian Burlton, much-lov'd *Geers* his *Marsh*
 And *Sutton-Acres*, drench'd with Regal Blood
 Of *Ethelbert* (Cy I. 67-71)³⁵

³⁵ See *Cyder*, ed. Goodridge and Pellicer, p.52 for full notes on the persons and locations to which Philips is referring.

The last in the list of locations, the mention of Sutton-Acres is also the first hint of the violence that underlies the fertile landscape within the poem. The death of the Anglo-Saxon King of East Anglia, Æthelbeht, assassinated at his wedding-feast by the Mercian King Offa, inevitably recalls the execution of King Charles I at the close of the English Civil War. The undertone of unease is not wholly abandoned in the next verse paragraph, which comments humorously on the 1575 landslip which occurred at Marcle Hill and displaced the nearby Kinnaston chapel. The wonder was much noted at the time, and Lea's map, like Saxton's, preserves a note of how Kinnaston chapel 'was dreuen downe by the remouing of the ground'. Recording local antiquities in his *Britannia* (1586), William Camden ascribed the removal to an earthquake, a scene which is expanded into a catastrophe in one of the later abridgements.³⁶ Philips does not treat the episode so seriously, pretending instead to fret that the 'Deceitful Ground' (Cy I. 80) may change its bounds once more, and 'to thy Neighbours Bounds transfer / The goodly Plants, affording Matter strange / For Law-Debates' (Cy I. 83-5). Although this seems to be a light-hearted view of the displacement of property and the transgression of agricultural boundaries, Philips writes within a century of the massive forfeiture and transfer of properties that took place both within the Protectorate and at the Restoration, and his advice to 'Fail not by frequent Vows t'implore Success; / Thus piteous Heav'n may fix the wand'ring Glebe' (Cy I. 87-7) can be read as a timely plea for stability given the uncertain state of the Stuart succession during the reign of Queen Anne.

³⁶ William Camden, *The Abridgment of Camden's Brita[n]nia with the Maps of the Seuerall Shires of England and Wales*. (London, 1626).



the map, including Lea's atlas of 1689. The ancient city is closely identified with Kentchester, site of the estate of Philip's friend William Dansey, or the '*Dantzeyan ground*' mentioned in the passage quoted above. However, its ruin is also echoed in another new feature in the Lea map: the inset city map of Hereford, the modern county town, with the caption above informing the reader that 'The Scotch Army laying Seige to this City of Hereford in the yeare 1644, occasioned the demolishing of the suburbs thereof'.³⁷ In Philips's poem, the urban destruction wrought by the Civil War is displaced into the historical account of the fall of Ariconium. This displacement made explicit in the simile wherein the earthquake that destroys the city is described as 'More dismal than the loud Disploded Roar / Of brazen Enginry, that ceaseless storm / The bastion of a well-built City' (Cy I 194-6), where the imagery of modern siege warfare seems to compare the fall of Ariconium with the unsuccessful siege of Hereford. The passage, with its account of a panicked populace and a whole city fallen into a 'Horrible Chasm, profound!' has all the terrors of the Miltonic sublime, but is subject to the curious slippage between seriousness and spoof that afflicts Philips's *Cyder*—one thinks unavoidably of the use of the exact same tone in 'The Splendid Shilling', when the narrator tells us that his trousers 'An horrid Chasm disclose, with Orifice / Wide, Discontinuous'.³⁸ In this light, the immediate transition back to the subject of cider making can seem humorous in its sudden change of subject and tone.

Upon that treacherous Tract of Land
[Ariconium] whilome stood; now *Ceres*, in her Prime,
Smiles fertile, and, with ruddiest Fruit bedeckt,
The Apple-Tree, by our Fore-fathers Blood
Improv'd, that now recalls the devious Muse,
Urging her destin'd Labours to pursue. (Cy I 242-7)

³⁷ Philip Lea, *All the Shires of England and Wales* (London, 1689).

³⁸ John Philips, 'The Splendid Shilling' in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), ll.124-5.

The passage invites two interpretations. If we are reading *Cyder* with an eye towards the Miltonic burlesque, we might accept Philips's characterisation of the 'devious Muse' making a detour into an overblown set-piece in order to enliven the 'destin'd labour' of the didactic passages of agricultural advice. However, if we read the account of the fall of Ariconium as serious in intent, we might note that the segue between destruction and fruitfulness echoes the earlier passage where Philips recommends Sutton as one of the best sites for an orchard, despite it being 'drench'd with Regal Blood' (Cy I 70). If the blood of our forefathers improves the apple's relish, then violence displaced into the past guarantees present fruitfulness. In this way, the destruction and disturbance wrought by the English Civil War can be absorbed back into the bucolic landscape of the Elizabethan cartographical order, in the same way that Saxton's cartography survives into the Lea's atlas and Philips's poetry with only a few notes to indicate the passing of a century.

Other similarities between the map and the poem are evident. Relying partly on patronage to justify the cost of printing his atlas, Lea displays several local coats of arms at the borders of his map, a similar strategy to Philips's wholesale importation of the Herefordshire nobility into a panegyric section at the close of his first book. In addition, one of the quirks of Christopher Saxton's original atlas is his decision not to incorporate the road system, rendering his atlas less than suitable for a commercial traveler. Though later printings, including Lea's, sketched in the road networks, they have little visual impact, being faint dotted lines of far less visual importance than the rivers, hills, towns and forests with which the map is filled. This relative neglect of the roads emphasizes a self-contained georgic landscape rather than a national commercial network, another element of the county map which is in harmony with Philips's own georgic and commercially isolationist principles.

If much of the county chorography described in *Cyder* seems to have a precursor in the cartographic image of Herefordshire present in Philip Lea's 1689 atlas, the form of the

georgic poem also has a precursor in the pastiche Miltonic blank verse which Philips had deployed to such success in his earlier works. One might suppose that such a Miltonic poem would be partially prompted by Milton's early work, *A Mask presented at Ludlow Castle*, set in the distinctly Silurian surroundings of Ludlow, just over the county border in nearby Shropshire. On closer examination, however, this proves doubtful. While Philips seems to have known *Paradise Lost* almost by heart, and borrows phrases from it almost constantly, references to *Paradise Regained*, *A Mask* or any other of the minor poems are either non-existent or doubtful.³⁹ A more likely source for Philips' initial inspiration is his own poem, 'The Splendid Shilling' with its extended mock-simile of the pipe-smoking 'Cambro-Briton' bringing his cheeses to market 'where Vaga's stream / Encircles Arinconium, faithful soil / Whence flow Nectareous Wines, that well may vye / With Massic, Setin, or renown'd Falern.'⁴⁰ This image appears to have seeded the idea of a georgic poem on Herefordshire that would ripen a few years later, when Philips returned to the praise of cider and its exaltation over all continental imports.

At one level, then, *Cyder* seems like a natural progression for Philips, incorporating a well-developed Miltonic style and developing themes briefly touched on in earlier works into an ambitious georgic poem that elaborates upon the received chorographical and cartographical image of Herefordshire. It would be unwise, however, to advocate an unconflicted marriage of form with content, Miltonic verse with Herefordshire geography. This would be to simplify the political associations of both elements, and their politics are not easily reconciled. Unlike the easy marriage of the Miltonic style to the burlesque or the

³⁹ This statement is made with reference to Charles Dunster's edition of *Cider, A Poem, in Two Books, by John Philips. With Notes, Provincial, Historical, and Classical*, (London, 1791). As was then the editorial fashion, Dunster provides footnotes full of parallel passages, which provide the fullest available index of Philips's borrowings.

⁴⁰ John Philips, 'The Splendid Shilling' in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999) ll.31-4.

panegyric, the attempt to blend Miltonic verse and its strong republican associations with an explicitly Royalist georgic landscape provokes the political tensions that underlie Milton's poetic fame. Only by negotiating these could Philips create the depoliticized Miltonic style that would go on to rival the heroic couplet and the Pindaric ode as the dominant verse form of the eighteenth century.

The Commonwealth, as mentioned above, failed to remap Britain and produce a cartographical claim to its sovereignty to rival the royal coat of arms consistently printed on maps prior to the Civil War and after the Restoration. In the meantime, Royalist poetry continued to shore up the monarchical claim to the English landscape.⁴¹ The foundational text of English landscape poetry, Sir John Denham's 'Cooper's Hill' (1642), written the year before the Civil War, is a locative, Royalist and imperialist poem whose narrator, from his perch on the eponymous hill, is able to pronounce on all the landscape about him, praising the imperial wealth the Thames brings to London, saluting Charles I's restoration of St Paul's Cathedral, and hailing him as 'the best of Kings.'⁴² Abraham Cowley's post-Civil War production *Sex Libri Plantarum*, which Pellicer identifies as a possible influence on Philips, devotes the sixth book to the civil war. In addition to another version of the frequently recounted anecdote of Charles II hiding in the oak tree after the disastrous Battle of Worcester, there is a striking passage in which the approaching civil war is foretold by the English landscape. My quotation here is from the Restoration translation, in which the sixth book was translated by Aphra Behn.

The impending fates o'er all the thickets reign'd
And ruin to the English woods proclaimed

⁴¹ Emblematic devices such as the Royal Oak that yoke together the monarchy and the English landscape can be seen as an attempt to reverse what Richard Helgerson perceives as a steady weakening of the monarchy's symbolic power, as the popular image of England becomes spatial rather than dynastic. See Helgerson, 'The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography and Subversion in Renaissance England'.

⁴² John Denham, 'Cooper's Hill' in *The Poetical Works of Sir John Denham*, ed. by Theodore Howard Banks, 2nd edition (Hamden, Conn. : Archon Books, 1969), 1.24.

We saw the sturdy oaks of monstrous growth
Whose spreading roots, fix'd in their native earth,
Where for a thousand years in peace they grew,
Torn from the soil, tho' none but Zephyrus blew.⁴³

The monarchy and the landscape are here so closely linked that the metaphorical storm of a political uprising produces the same devastating effects as a real storm. By using Milton's blank verse, Philips's poem risked undoing this poetic and symbolic yoking of land and monarchy, and remapping the heart of England as a republican landscape. Instead, Philips makes strenuous efforts to make Milton's verse conform to a Royalist paradigm, and this visible strain gives his poem its political edge. *Cyder* attempts to preserve and assert the existence of Herefordshire as expressed in Saxton's county map: in Bernard Klein's terms, as an arena where 'the descriptive paradigms [of] cosmography and modern estate surveying are at once contained in, and superseded by a cartographically constructed image of sovereignty, simultaneously conceived of as a world by itself and a perfect and well-kept estate.'⁴⁴ In this representation Herefordshire functions both as an example of political loyalty to the Crown, and as a perfectly governed Edenic world-within-itself, largely independent of external resources. The image of Eden which Milton developed in *Paradise Lost* was obviously well suited to this representation, but for the poem to be successful, Milton's cosmographic style also had to be downscaled to the chorographic level of a county map. In the first book of *Cyder*, Philips accomplishes this task by developing his own georgic aesthetic as an alternative to Milton's cosmographic view.

The georgic/chorographic perspective

⁴³ Abraham Cowley, *The Third Part of the Works of Mr. Abraham Cowley Being His Six Books of Plants*, trans. by Aphra Behn and others (London: 1689), p.134.

⁴⁴ Klein, *Maps and the writing of space*, p.81.

For Philips, georgic poetry is characterised by minute enquiry rather than sweeping overview, and the first book develops this inquisitive perspective as an alternative to the lordly eye of the Miltonic observer as it inquires with solemnity into the correct methods of dunging, grafting, thinning and repelling insects. A key passage in the explication of this perspective follows immediately after the recommendation of the ground on which to site the orchard, when Philips reflects on how even the most barren landscape can be made fruitful.

Thus naught is useless made; nor is there Land,
 But what, or of it self, or else compell'd,
 Affords Advantage. On the barren Heath
 The Shepherd tends his Flock, that daily crop
 Their verdant Dinner from the mossie Turf,
 Sufficient; after them the Cackling Goose,
 Close-grazer, finds wherewith to ease her Want.
 What shou'd I more? Even on the clifly Height
 Of *Penmenmaur*, and that Cloud-piercing Hill,
Plinlimmon, from afar the traveller kens
 Astonish'd, how the Goats their shrubby Brouze
 Gnaw pendent; nor untrembling canst thou see
 How from a scraggy Rock, whose Prominence
 Half overshades the Ocean, hardy Men,
 Fearless of rending Winds, and dashing Waves,
 Cut Sampire, to excite the squeamish Gust
 Of pamper'd Luxury. Then, let thy ground
 Not lye unlabour'd; if the richest Stem
 Refuse to thrive, yet who wou'd doubt to plant
 Somewhat, that may to Human Use redound,
 And Penury, the worst of Ills, remove? (Cy I. 98-118)

Given that in the opening of the poem Philips has listed his 'Native Soil' (Cy I. 5) as an enabling element in his verse, the passage can be read as an allegorical *ars poetica*. The poetic phenomenon of belatedness, wherein an author feels himself overshadowed by a previous writer who appears to have said all that can be said on a certain subject, finds a humorous counterpart in the 'Cackling Goose, / Close-Grazer' following where others have already grazed before, and Philips invites us to read the fowl as a metaphor for the poet himself and his developing aesthetic of close observation. His abrupt leap beyond the borders of Herefordshire to describe the goats browsing on the mountains of Wales also allows him to

revise the Miltonic aesthetic, for while no specifically Miltonic reference is used, the more-than-usually convoluted syntax and Philips's obvious delight in the rolling polysyllabic names of the Welsh mountains recall Milton's own delight in exotic place-names and panoramas. These lines are intended to recall 'the sacred top / Of Oreb or of Sinai' (*PL* I. 6-7), or Satan's perch upon Mount Niphates, or the mountain to which Michael leads Adam for the prophetic final books of the epic. The reader of Milton's epic, accustomed to such panoramic viewing stations on which the traveller may perch, reads the ambiguous phrase 'from afar the traveller kens' and places the traveller on the mountaintop looking down. It is only at the end of the sentence when the convoluted syntax resolves itself that the spatial relationship between the observed and the observer inverts. Rather than the traveller looking down upon the mountain goats (which would give him little reason to be astonished), he is gazing from the plain up towards the cliffs, in awe of their perilous agility. Expecting a sweeping view of the landscape, we are instead offered a view of foraging goats, in a literary bait-and-switch which makes a clear aesthetic distinction between Milton's epic panoramas and Philips's georgic, chorographic perspective.

Philips's recasting of earlier poetic perspectives is not done, however, for the passage on samphire-harvesting that follows is taken from William Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The passage, wherein Edgar describes the view from the cliffs of Dover to the blind Gloucester, is one of the most evocative descriptions of visual perspective in the English language, and has attracted a wealth of critical comment.⁴⁵

Stand still: how fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low.
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles. Half-way down

⁴⁵ See, for example, Alan C Dessen, *Elizabethan Drama and the Viewer's Eye* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1977) pp.121-4, or Michael Hattaway, 'Shakespeare and the Invention of Landscape: the View from Dover Cliff' in *Shakespeare's World / World Shakespeares* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008).

Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade;
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice, and yon tall anchoring barque
Diminished to her cock, her cock a buoy
Almost too small for sight.⁴⁶

Though the ideal viewer that Philips addresses shows some similar signs of affect at the precariousness and danger of the samphire-gatherer's work, the 'dreadful trade' is rather praised than deplored by his characterisation of the hardy and fearless men employed in it. His description of the cliff as an overhang 'whose Prominence / Half overshades the ocean' accentuates the difficulty of the gatherer's task, even as it casts uncertainty on the viewing position of this trembling observer, to whom the gatherer will no longer be visible from the cliff's edge. Rather, the focus is on how a living can be wrung even from this apparently barren soil, a message at one with the reassuring message of the georgic that a life of labour allows first subsistence and eventually abundance.

Philips defines his perspective in relation to Milton again when he draws on the interest sparked by Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* (1667) in his poetic description of a microscope, in an obvious counterpart to Milton's famous Galilean similes.⁴⁷ The telescope, the instrument with which Galileo overturned the Ptolemaic cosmography, assists the fallen vision of mankind to glimpse God's astronomical workings, but proves less reliable than the divinely inspired epic vision. This is why, in *Paradise Lost* the faculty of magnified observation provokes only an unreliable vision, 'as when by night the glass / Of Galileo, less

⁴⁶ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by R A Foakes (London: London : Arden Shakespeare, 2009), IV.6.11-20.

⁴⁷ Robert Hooke, *Micrographia: Or, Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies Made by Magnifying Glasses: With Observations and Inquiries Thereupon* (London, 1667). For an account of Hooke's theories of using instruments to sharpen man's fallen vision, see Jim Bennett, 'Instruments and Ingenuity' in *Robert Hooke: Tercentennial Studies*, ed. by M A R (Michael Alan Ralph) Cooper and Michael Cyril William Hunter (Aldershot : Ashgate, 2006). For an account of the relationship between John Milton and Robert Hooke, see William Poole, 'Milton and Science: A Caveat', *Milton Quarterly*, 38.1 (2004), 18-34.

assured observes / Imagined lands and regions in the moon' (*PL* V. 261-3). Whereas persuasive arguments have been made for Milton's use of a telescope, his acquaintance with the microscope is much more doubtful.⁴⁸ Its only mention in his poetry is the 'Aerie Microscope' (*PR* V. 7) which Satan uses to show Rome to Christ. However, this device performs more like a telescope than a microscope, allowing a distant observer to view Rome from within and without. David Thorley argues persuasively that the onset of Milton's blindness would have made him unable to appreciate seventeenth-century microscopy in person, and that in *Paradise Regained*, 'Far from making the heavens appreciable to man, the microscope distorts and magnifies base, tiny, crawling beasts out of their natural proportion'.⁴⁹ Satan's panoramic view of the grandeur that was Rome is one more example of this distortion, in its magnification of the temporal at the expense of the spiritual.

Philips's microscope stands in contrast as a device that both embodies and exhibits the triumphs of the personified figure of Experience, who uncovers 'The diff'rent Qualities of things [...] And secret Motions' (*Cy* I. 331-2). Unlike the broad majority of the early eighteenth-century poetry surveyed by Marjorie Nicolson (from which catalogue Philips is sadly missing) the microscope does not provoke matters 'for jest, for raillery, for light-hearted satire'.⁵⁰ There is a definite flavour of the mock-heroic in the account of how the microscope 'Enlarges to ten Millions of Degrees / The Mite' (*Cy* I. 345-6) and 'shews what Laws of Life / The Cheese-Inhabitants observe, and how / Fabrick their Mansions in the harden'd Milk' (*Cy* I. 347-9), but it also celebrates a very georgic aesthetic—one that

⁴⁸ The original advocate for Milton's acquaintance with a spyglass was Marjorie Hope Nicolson, 'Milton and the Telescope', *ELH*, 2:1 (1935), 1–32.

⁴⁹ David Thorley, 'Milton and the Microscope', *ELH*, 81.3 (2014), 865–88, (p.886).

⁵⁰ Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Science and Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y: Great Seal Books, 1956), p. 199. Kevis Goodman's more recent discussion of georgic microscopy also sidelines Philips for an argument centered on James Thomson's *The Seasons*: see Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

discovers more detail and interest the closer it inquires into the very smallest and apparently least significant things. For instance, the ordered life and civic-mindedness Virgil finds in his bee colony is echoed by the industrious cheese-inhabitants, whose occupations are not wholly mocked. Certainly, Philips's next example of microscopic observation is not at all mock-heroic. In fact, his description of apple seeds viewed under the lens of the microscope counts as one of his most successful passages, given the sense of wonder it evokes.

Strange forms arise, in each a little Plant
Unfolds its Boughs: observe the slender Threads
Of first-beginning Trees, their Roots, their Leaves
In narrow Seeds describ'd; Thou'lt wond'ring say,
An inmate Orchat ev'ry Apple boasts. (Cy I. 354-9)

Hooke had referred to seeds as being 'the Cabinet of Nature, wherein are laid up its jewels' (p.152) but while the *Micrographia* illustrates corn-violet, thyme, poppy and purslane seeds and describes numerous others, there is no mention of apple seeds. It seems at least possible that Philips had access to a microscope of his own and writes here from direct observation. In any case, the attention here paid to the growth of great trees from small seeds mimics Milton's own interest in origins, and his appeal to the Holy Spirit to 'Instruct me, for thou know'st; Thou from the first / Wast present' (PL I. 19-20). Although lacking the grandeur of Milton's account of the origin of all things, the idea of an 'inmate Orchat' lying quiescent in every apple vindicates the minute observation of the georgic eye by exhibiting how great things grow from small beginnings. By the end of the first book, these and other examples have developed Philips's georgic aesthetic to a high standard, and the georgic landscape will provide an important retreat for the poet after the dramatic confrontation at the end of the book, wherein Philips acknowledges Milton's influence and confronts their political differences.

The reckoning with Milton

As I noted earlier, John Milton remained a controversial figure at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and *Cyder* requires some sort of reckoning in order to reconcile Philips's royalism with the republican inflection of Milton's blank verse. Other poets had already mixed their express admiration for Milton's poetry with an excoriation of his polemical prose and his political sympathies. In 1694, a young Joseph Addison, in his 'Account of the Greatest English Poets' had found reason to lament Milton's early career:

O had the Poet ne'er profaned his pen,
To varnish o'er the guilt of faithless men,
His other works might have deserved applause;
But now the language can't support the cause:
While the clear current, tho' serene and bright
Betrays a bottom odious to the sight⁵¹

These lines, however, follow a long section that is fulsome in its praise of *Paradise Lost*. Addison's admonitions relate only to the prose, are written in a very un-Miltonic style, and are careful to distinguish between Milton's lucid language and the supposed deficiencies of his argument.

The criticism Philips ventures upon is much more daring. At the conclusion of the first book of *Cyder*, he honours his poetic debts to 'sacred *Virgil*', '*Maeonides*, / Poor eyeless Pilgrim!' and 'tender *Spencer*' (Cy I. 773, 781). His treatment of Milton, however, to whom he owes his greatest poetic debt of style and language, is anything but tender. It can only be described as an attempt to use the language and structure of *Paradise Lost* in an attack upon the author himself: to repudiate Milton in Milton's own terms.

Oh, had but He that first ennobled Song
With holy Raptures, like his *Abdiel* been,
'Mong many faithless, strictly faithful found;
Unpity'd, he should not have wail'd his Orbs,
That roll'd in vain to find the piercing Ray,

⁵¹ Joseph Addison, 'An Account of the Great English Poets' in *Milton: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by John T. Shawcross (London: Routledge, 1970), vol. 1, p.105-6. See also Thomas Yalden's 'On the Reprinting of Milton's Prose Works' on p.122-3 of the same volume, whose criticism of Milton's 'impious mercenary pen' is more biting, but whose smooth heroic couplets are similarly un-Miltonic.

And found no Dawn, by dim Suffusion veil'd!
(Cy I. 785-93)

This passage has become a kind of testing ground for Harold Bloom's theory, in *The Anxiety of Influence*, that Milton was 'the great Inhibitor, the Sphinx who strangles even strong imaginations in their cradles'; in other words a 'strong' poet who threw most of the 'weak' eighteenth-century writers into the shadow of his influence; an influence from which English poetry was unable to escape until the rise of new strong poets in the romantic period.⁵² Dustin Griffin attempts to prove the precise opposite, arguing that Milton was a congenial and helpful influence on a wide range of eighteenth-century writers. Eliding in his quotation the passage wherein Philips refers to Milton's blindness, which has a bitter smack of the Royalist taunt that Milton lost his blindness as divine punishment for his writings against the King, Griffin finds a placid Philips 'insist[ing] gently on the differences between a royalist Tory and a republican.'⁵³ Whilst acknowledging that 'Milton's verse and language are [...] put to profoundly unMiltonic ends', Griffin reads the new synthesis of Miltonic style and Royalist subject matter as a fundamentally benign act of creativity, in support of his argument that 'even minor poets, far from seeing Milton as a repressive burden, saw his work as a resource on which they might draw.'⁵⁴ Pellicer offers a balanced adjudication and assessment when he argues that 'Philips made a deliberate choice to imitate closely, not in order to transcend poetic anxiety but to abide in it'.⁵⁵ For Pellicer, the Miltonic allusions and echoes that abound in Philips's poetry are the product of 'anxiety as well as empowerment', and this reading accords with my argument that Philips's politically tendentious engagement with Milton's style gives shape and tension to the originality of the poem's setting and landscape.⁵⁶

⁵² Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p.32.

⁵³ Griffin, 'The Bard of Cyder-Land: John Philips and Miltonic Imitation', p. 453.

⁵⁴ Griffin, 'The Bard of Cyder-Land: John Philips and Miltonic Imitation', pp. 455, 442.

⁵⁵ Pellicer, *Life, Works, Reception*, p. 161.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

In my approach to this passage, I want to argue for an example of the flexibility of Philips's Miltonic imitation that has passed by even such attentive critics as Dunster and Pellicer. They track down the reference to Abdiel to the close of Book V of *Paradise Lost*, where the narrator lauds 'the seraph Abdiel faithful found, / Among the faithless, faithful only he' (*PL* V. 896-7). Philips is here equating the War in Heaven with the English Civil War, and criticising Milton for not following the example of his own Abdiel, the only angel among Satan's host who keeps faith with God (or King Charles, in this allegorical reading) and turns away from rebellion. The sentence also contains another reference to *Paradise Lost*, as the language in which Milton's blindness is described comes from the opening of Book III: 'these eyes that roll in vain / To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn; / So thick a drop serene hath quenched their orbs, / Or dim suffusion veiled' (*PL* III. 23-6). At this point, Milton is describing his own blindness before calling on his poetic vision to describe events in Heaven. However, the syntax of the line as Philips recasts it, 'And found no Dawn, by Dim Suffusion veiled!', performs a second Miltonic allusion inside the first. The echo here is of the fallen angels in Book II who:

apart sat on a hill retired,
 In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
 Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
 Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.
 (*PL* II. 557-61, italics mine)

The whole of *Cyder* shows that John Philips is a man who has a quotation from *Paradise Lost* for every occasion, and the precise syntactic parallel between 'no end, in wandering mazes lost' and 'no Dawn, by Dim Suffusion veiled' is almost certainly deliberate. Philips uses Milton's own words to imply that the poet has fallen short of the moral standing of his own angelic hero, and instead has wandered into error with the fallen angels. It is a striking subversion of Milton's own claims to rectitude through a divine source of inspiration, not

least through the subtlety of its implication. The struggle here may be more political than it is poetical, but it is difficult to read it as the recognition of the influence of a benign father figure.

This usurpation of Milton's language for an attack on Milton himself is naturally a strain to the poem, and rather than concluding this book with a complete excoriation of Milton's character, Philips chooses to break off mid-line, leaving the attack on Milton as a fragmentary utterance. Backing away from the combative tone of the previous passage, his conclusion shows him distancing himself from Milton not only politically but also spatially.

But He—However, let the Muse abstain,
Nor blast his Fame, from whom she learnt to sing
In much inferior Strains, grov'ling beneath
Th'Olympian Hill, on Plains, and Vales intent,
Mean Follower. There let her rest a-while
Pleas'd with the fragrant Walks, and cool Retreat.
(Cy I. 791-6)

The concluding lines, in which the poet drops down from Milton's 'Olympian Hill' to the 'Plains, and Vales', 'fragrant Walks, and cool Retreat' is outwardly the act of a poet of humility refraining from striking down a beloved master. However, the passage also re-enacts the inverted Miltonic perspectives we have seen Philips using throughout the rest of Book I, backing away from the mountain-top station and sublime prospect of the cosmographic vision, and championing instead the 'Plains, and Vales', the true sphere of georgic chorography. Mirroring Philips's transformation of epic materials into georgic ones, this retreat is a very tactical move.

Philips continues his revisionist approach to Milton's War in Heaven in Book II of the poem, where Milton's own characterisation of the fallen angels and the Satanic revolt is applied to the Parliamentary side of the English Civil War. From a mock-heroic description of a drunken brawl, the poem transitions to a list of all the hideous maladies that overindulgence may lead to, a passage dignified with several echoes of the lazar-house of

Death that Michael reveals to Adam in Book XI of *Paradise Lost*. Philips then implores ‘Ye Heavenly Powers, that Guard / The British Isles’ not to ‘let Civil Broils / Ferment from social cups’ (Cy II. 479-82) as they did in the English Civil War. Here, the comparison between the Roundheads and the Fallen Angels is hardly subtle. ‘Can we forget how the mad, headstrong rout / Defy’d their Prince to Arms?’ (Cy II. 498-9) Philips asks, alleging that they must have been ‘Instill’d by him, who first presumed t’oppose / Omnipotence’ (Cy II. 504-5): in other words, Satan himself. Both passages draw upon the same line, ‘Who durst defy the omnipotent to arms’ (PL I. 49) with which Milton introduces the punishments of the fallen angels. ‘Alike their Crime, th’Event / Was not alike’ (Cy II. 504-5) Philips notes sadly, in case the reader had failed to catch the parallels. Whereas his negotiation with Milton’s posthumous reputation was handled with some subtlety, here the equation of rebels with devils is written as a straightforward allegory. All we need now is the Abdiel figure Milton disappointingly refused to be, and here steps forward ‘the Cyder-Land unstain’d with Guilt; / The Cyder-Land, obsequious still to Thrones’ (Cy II. 514-5). In the tumult of a national civil war, it remains loyal to the throne and monarchy; amid the chaos of a fallen world it remains the model of an unfallen Eden; at the dawn of a new century, it preserves the rural idyll of the Elizabethan Atlas.

From the local to the global

The bountiful fertility and productivity of the Royalist Herefordshire landscape Philips celebrates raises the profitable possibility of trade and commerce with other, less advantageously situated regions of the globe. In Philips’s poem, however, the potential for export is always in tension with the Edenic self-containment of the Herefordshire landscape, which is capable of producing everything necessary for a wholesome and healthy British lifestyle. His panegyric on Herefordshire cider is a case in point:

Why should we wish for more? Or why, in quest
 Of Foreign Vintage, insincere, and mixt
 Traverse th'extremest world? Why tempt the rage
 Of the rough Ocean? When our native glebe
 Imparts, from bounteous womb, annual recruits
 Of wine delectable, that far surmounts
 Gallic, or Latin grapes, or those that see
 The setting sun near Calpe's tow'ring height.
 (Cy I. 530-41)

Nor is this all. Cider is not only innately superior to French, Italian or Spanish wines, but it is so polymorphous a drink that it can contain all things in its variations.

Some Cyders have by Art, or Age unlearn'd
 Their genuine Relish, and of sundry Vines
 Assum'd the Flavour; one sort counterfeits
 The *Spanish* product, this, to *Gauls* has seem'd
 The sparkling *Nectar of Champagne*; with that,
 A *German* oft has swill'd his Throat, and sworn,
 Deluded, that Imperial *Rhine* bestow'd
 The Generous Rummer
 (Cy II. 298-305)

It would perhaps be easy to pass over this passage as a piece of burlesque provincial chauvinism, remembering perhaps the Landlady in *The History of Tom Jones*, who was delighted that her guests 'found no Fault with my Worcestershire Perry, which I sold them for Champagne'.⁵⁷ As often with Philips, however, the level of seriousness is difficult to judge, especially as the rejection of foreign imports in favour of native produce is a theme sustained over the course of the book. When Philips asks whether 'the Fleece / *Baetic*, or finest *Tarentine*, compare / With *Lemster's* silken Wool?' (Cy I. 583-5), the rhetorical question seems to seriously invite us to give preference to native Shropshire wool over Spanish or Italian merchandise, anticipating a key theme of John Dyer's sequel georgic, *The Fleece*.

⁵⁷ Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones : A Foundling*, ed. by Martin C Battestin and Fredson Bowers (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1974), p.533.

The conflict between the self-sustaining chorographic landscape Philips sketches in the first book of the poem and the policy of colonial expansion endorsed in the second book is not satisfactorily resolved in the body of the poem. No isolationist, while Philips salutes the local and symbolic virtues of ‘the sturdy Oak, / A Prince’s Refuge once, the æternal Guard / Of England’s Throne’ (Cy II. 574-6), he also salutes the way it ‘Stems the vast Main and bears tremendous War / To distant Nations, or with Sov’ran Sway / Aws the divided World to Peace and Love’ (Cy II. 577-9). The oak is both the symbol of the British monarchy and a projection of Britain’s power abroad for the purposes of war and peacekeeping—the one thing that is not mentioned, of course, is trade. While in Philips’s writing we see none of the rage against foreign luxury that would fuel some of the satires of Pope, Johnson and Smollet later in the century, his sentiments are heavily protectionist. Herefordshire, like Eden, is a self-contained, self-sustaining garden that requires no outside input.

Towards the poem’s end, Philips describes the union of England and Scotland as precipitating the colonial adventures of a newly energised nation, describing the return of British ships laden ‘with Odorous spoils / Of *Araby* well fraught, and Indus wealth / Pearl and barbaric gold’ (Cy II. 655-7). Notably, these are not true accounts of Britain’s imperial plunder but echoes of two passages from Milton: the ‘barbaric pearl and gold’ that ornaments Satan’s throne (*PL* II. 4) and the scents that reach him from Eden, like ‘Sabeian odours from the spicy shore / Of *Araby* the blest’ (*PL* IV. 162-3). The original negative context of these quotations seems irrelevant to Philip’s meaning; as Dustin Griffin notes, ‘the ideological deviation from the Miltonic original is indicated by the Satanic associations of Philips’s commercial fantasy’.⁵⁸ The Satanic element of colonialism is here rewritten as celebratory, but what is also evident from this passage is that these fantastic Miltonic riches are totally

⁵⁸ Griffin, ‘The Bard of Cyder-Land: John Philips and Miltonic Imitation’, p.456.

irrelevant to the self-contained georgic economy described in the rest of the poem. The wholesale importation of Miltonic imagery is an indication of the difficulty Philips faces in articulating a view of imperial endeavour that enriches and glorifies Britain without providing this self-sustaining island with anything it actually needs. The import of essential commodities would only render the population dependent on foreign commerce and isolate the inhabitants from their georgic roots. Accordingly, the poem circles back from this imperial vision of British dominion to the ‘rich Grain, and timely Fruits’ (Cy II. 659) that are the true treasures of the georgic labourers, when ‘glad they talk / Of baleful Ills, caus’d by *Bellona*’s wrath / In other Realms’ (Cy II. 663-5), valuing their own safety and security the more for the war and confusion they see beyond their borders.

When, in the concluding clause, the poem attempts to contain the georgic and the imperial in one simultaneous vision, the effect is not entirely convincing.

where-e’er the British spread
Triumphant Banners, or their Fame has reach’d
Diffusive, to the utmost Bounds of this
Wide Universe, *Silurian* Cyder borne
Shall please all tastes, and triumph o’er the Vine.
(Cy II. 665-9)

The yoking together of British imperial power with the widespread popularity of cider as a beverage concludes the poem on a note of triumph that sounds distinctly flat. Despite Philips’s enthusiastic endorsement of imperial expansion, the chorographical georgic poem lacks conviction when it tries to project its valuation of cider onto a global scale. Only John Dyer’s longer four-book poem *The Fleece* will pursue this goal with any level of success.

John Dyer – from ‘Commercial Map’ to *The Fleece*

As with *Cyder*, *The Fleece* (1757) was the climax of a career cut short by consumption, with Dyer expiring in the same year as the poem’s publication. His varied career as poet, parson, painter, farmer and traveller gave him a far greater base of practical knowledge than Philips,

and *The Fleece* is written on a much more expansive scale that begins by describing the sheep-farming and textile economy within Britain, and concludes with a bravura description of the global extent of Britain's wool trade. The didacticism of much of this material, which was intended to inform as much as to entertain, has probably weakened the poem's appeal; it is no longer true for modern readers what Anna Letitia Barbauld claimed in defence of didactic poetry, that 'we are delighted to find with how much dexterity the artist of verse can avoid a technical term, how neatly he can turn an uncouth word, and with how much grace embellish a scientific idea.'⁵⁹ John Dyer's *The Fleece* would have brought great pleasure to such a rhetorically-aware audience, who would have approved the inventive circumlocutions and Latinisms needed to keep up the dignity of the Miltonic style in the face of such potentially bathetic subject matter as the diseases of sheep, or the growth of the textile industry. Such an audience did once exist, as is seen by the healthy growth of the British georgic during the first part of the eighteenth century, which saw, beside Philips's and Dyer's productions, Christopher Smart's *The Hop Garden* (1752) and James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* (1764). The reason for its relatively sudden decline is debateable, with some critics alleging a bottoming out of moral authority after the publication of Grainger's slave-owning georgic.⁶⁰ Thirty years after the publication of *The Fleece*, Hannah More gives a good indication of how far from fashion the georgic had fallen in her portrait of a bluff, hearty and hopelessly out-of-date country squire in *Florio: A Tale* (1787).

In books that he might lose no minute,
His very verse had business in it.

⁵⁹ Anna Letitia Barbauld 'On Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination' in Mark Akenside, *The Pleasures of Imagination* (London, 1818), p.6.

⁶⁰ For Tim Fulford, *The Sugar Cane* 'demonstrated the evacuation of morality from a genre that had begun as a way of defining the virtuous life.' See Tim Fulford, "'Nature" poetry', in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by John E. Sitter (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 166. Cf. Rachel Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) who sees Cyder and *The Fleece* as recapitulating the essential georgic theme of decline from a plenteous garden into a world of labour.

He ne'er had heard of bards of GREECE
But had read half of DYER'S FLEECE.
His sphere of knowledge still was wider,
His Georgics, 'PHILIPS upon cider [.]'⁶¹

In this affectionate portrayal of a gentleman philistine, the unfashionable georgic poetry he reads is proof of his indelible provincialism. Yet the fact that Sir Gilbert has only read half of Dyer's *Fleece* is suggestive of the poem's range. While Dyer's first book conforms to the localism of Philips's county-scale precursor, the following three books evidence a growing breadth of vision as they take in the spread of sheep farming across continental Europe and the worldwide scope of Britain's wool-trading networks.

In the late twentieth century, critical acknowledgement of the scope of Dyer's verse has been the principal point of his rehabilitation within the academy. While many early critics were content to dismiss *The Fleece* as an amusing concept but a dry and laborious read for anyone but a textile historian, John Barrell and John Goodridge make strong arguments for the poem's importance as an account of eighteenth-century society and for the essential dignity of Dyer's subject. For Barrell, *The Fleece* presents 'the most whole vision of eighteenth-century society that is offered anywhere in its poetry, holding together rural and industrial, industrial and mercantile, domestic and imperial concerns', and the chief interest of the poem lies in its not altogether successful attempt to harmonise these divergent discourses.⁶² Meanwhile, the thorough understanding of eighteenth-century farming and rural economics displayed in *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century Poetry* allows John Goodridge to make substantial claims for the importance of the wool trade.

If in the eighteenth century, as may fairly be argued, the ability of the nation to survive and flourish depended to a great extent on the ability of landowners and farmers to

⁶¹ Hannah More, 'Florio: A Tale' in *Poems* (London: 1816; facsimile ed. London: Routledge, 1996) p.117

⁶² John Barrell, *English Literature in History, 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p.104.

supply large amounts of inexpensive mutton to the capital, and large amounts of wool to the textile industry and thence to the world, then ‘The care of sheep’ might indeed become an epic theme.⁶³

We have come far from the patronising assessment Goodridge quotes as the criticism of an earlier age, that Dyer ‘sings the wool-trade with honest observation and amiably rotund diction’.⁶⁴ With its emphasis on the nation’s reliance on sheep farming, and clear sense of how the local expands into the global as the raw wool is processed and exported abroad, this sympathetic reading helps to restore to us Dyer’s own sense of his poem’s importance. It is clear that if cider lacked conviction as a universal export, British wool was a much more likely candidate for expansion into a commercial geography. Hence I argue that while the image of Herefordshire in *Cyder* is still very much akin to that of Christopher Saxton’s 1583 map, the geography of *The Fleece* can be drawn from two different cartographical projects: Dyer’s unrealised ‘Commercial Map of England’, of which only the plan and notes remain in manuscript, and the *Atlas Commercialis et Maritimus* (1728), which I read as an analogue and possible source text for the poem. Furthermore, while Philips merely sought to adapt the epic language of *Paradise Lost* to the subject of cider-making in Herefordshire, Dyer makes reference to a far wider range of Milton’s poetry. The progress of *The Fleece* from practical advice on sheep-farming through to a global survey of Britain’s wool-trade is paralleled by Milton’s own development from the early pastoral lyricism of *A Masque performed at Ludlow Castle* and ‘L’Allegro’ through to the assured epic vision sustained in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

When John Philips published *Cyder* in 1708, the cartographical image of Herefordshire had remained virtually unchanged for over a century, and, aside from the

⁶³ Goodridge, *Rural Life*, p.96.

⁶⁴ Boris Ford, *The Pelican Guide to English Literature 4*, quoted in John Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.96.

occasional private estate map, the tradition of English surveying had all but stagnated. In 1757, meanwhile, John Dyer's *The Fleece* arrived on the cusp of a cartography boom. By 1755, the Military Survey of Scotland had completed its seven-year task, initially set on foot in reaction to the lack of geographical knowledge that had hampered attempts to hunt down the Jacobite leaders of the '45. They produced by far the most accurate map of Scotland up to that date, and instigated a government-sponsored cartographical tradition that would eventually produce the Ordnance Survey maps of today.⁶⁵ Daniel Defoe's *A Tour through the whole island of Great Britain*, with its focus on the commerce of the country, came out in three volumes between 1724 and 1727, while John Rocques's new map of Shropshire, with its individual field markings and innovative distinctions between arable, heath and pasture lands came out in 1752. The pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* were filled with maps accompanying various projects for new roads, canals and waterways.⁶⁶

Far from being a poem of dusty provincialism, therefore, *The Fleece* can be viewed as a verse project on a similarly ambitious scale, motivated by a similar drive towards commercial infrastructure as a public good. John Dyer himself had attempted to leap onto the cartographical bandwagon, making notes and producing a manuscript proposal for 'A Commercial Map of England' before abandoning the project to work on his longer poem. The map would have covered both England and Wales and have mapped resources, such as coal, wool, or tin mines in addition to the standard cartographical features of roads and cities. Dyer did not merely intend to faithfully represent these features, but to produce a map that would give 'those, who have a sense of commercial improvements, many new hints and much pleasure; and assist them in judging Where Canals or Roads should be made for the better

⁶⁵ Rachel Hewitt, *Map of a Nation* (London: Granta Books, 2010), pp.1-42.

⁶⁶ Delano-Smith, *English Maps: A History*, p.83.

intercourse of trading Towns'.⁶⁷ Describing an imagined future infrastructure alongside current resources, the map would have been a utopian space almost as much as a cartographical one. Dyer anticipates several nineteenth-century civic projects, notably canals, in his attempts to sketch out a self-sufficient England in which internal trade is improved to the point where the requirement for foreign commerce is effectively minimised. If not quite a depiction of a post-scarcity Britain, the 'Commercial Map' depicted a land where scarcity is held at bay through a plethora of new commercial infrastructure. The map would have been a realisation of the vision at the conclusion of *Cyder* of a little England writ large, with Philips's poetic eulogies to British products replaced by a cartography of a self-sufficient nation.

John Barrell describes the 'Commercial Map' as sketching out 'a nation in which every possibility for economic exchange is maximised, and in which the traditional oppositions between agriculture and manufactures, country and city disappear into a uniform commercial modernity'.⁶⁸ At one level, *The Fleece* reinstates these oppositions through the linearity that the poem's structure demands but a map can bypass: Dyer devotes the first book to agriculture in the form of sheep farming, whilst the third book deals with the products of the urban textile trade. On the other hand, the poem works by erasing the gap between the timeless pastoral and commercial modernity. As it follows its subject across all its permutations, *The Fleece* works on a huge variety of different scales, ranging from the eye of the observant farmer in the first book who notices how his sheep 'crop / At ev'ry fourth collection to the mouth, / Unsav'ry crow-flow'r' (*Fl* I. 308-9) to the global vision of Britain's

⁶⁷ John Dyer, unpublished manuscript notes, plan and related materials for a 'Commercial Map of England', (Durham, Dean and Chapter Library, Longstaffe Collection), f.38r. Further references to this material will be given parenthetically. I must here express my deep gratitude to Professor John Goodridge for sharing with me his transcription of the manuscript and notes.

⁶⁸ John Barrell, 'Afterword', in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850*, ed. by Gerald M MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.240.

trading links in the fourth book. As a totalising view of the eighteenth-century commerce that assimilates naval trading routes to the progress of the muse, the poem reproduces cartographical representations and strategies of viewing in its verse.

Remapping the pastoral

John Dyer's blank verse inherits the latinate diction and orotund style that characterises most Miltonic imitations, but lacks the extensive allusions and breezy note of mock-heroism that undercuts Philips's most serious passages. His poetry will start on a small county scale, but will expand to take in the entire atlas, while keeping resolutely to an earth-bound cartography that does not encroach upon Milton's elaborate cosmological backdrop. The opening of the poem stages this gradual increase in scale as the invocation moves from local to national importance.

The care of Sheep, the labors of the Loom,
And arts of Trade, I sing. Ye rural nymphs,
Ye swains, and princely merchants, aid the verse.
And ye, high-trusted guardians of our isle,
Whom public voice, to the great charge assigns,
Or lot of birth: ye good, of all degrees,
Parties, and sects, be present to my song.
So may distress, and wretchedness, and want,
The wide felicities of labor learn:
So may the proud attempts of restless Gaul
From our strong borders, like a broken wave,
In empty foam retire. But chiefly THOU,
The people's shepherd, eminently plac'd
Over the num'rous swains of ev'ry vale,
With well-permitted pow'r and watchful eye
On each gay field to shed beneficence,
Celestial office! THOU protect the song. (*Fl* I. 1-17)

Whereas Milton was famously contented that *Paradise Lost* should 'fit audience find, though few' (*PL* VII. 31), and Philips presented *Cyder* to a provincial aristocracy of 'Ariconian knights and fairest dames' (*Cy* I. 7), Dyer here addresses a wide swathe of society, incorporating shepherds, merchants, members of parliament, and the King himself. Like the

‘Commercial Map’ with its draft dedication ‘To the truly Noble; & to the Promoters of most great Works, the Merchants of England; and to all Manufacturers Traders & Men of honest Industry’ (f.28r), *The Fleece* is addressed to a broad audience. This incorporative opening establishes that this is no address to private or local virtue, but a truly national work with important didactic and polemic objectives. The two most important of these are highlighted as the promotion of labour as a means of alleviating the plight of the poor and a secure nation triumphant in its commercial competition with France.

The verse paragraph then moves to its climax with its dedication to the King, in a passage that draws upon the opening of *Paradise Lost*. George II is described in terms that recall not only Milton’s description of Moses as ‘the shepherd who first taught the chosen seed’ (*PL* I. 8), but also the Holy Spirit: ‘And chiefly thou O Spirit [...] Instruct me, for thou knowst; thou from the first / Wast present’ (*PL* I. 17-20). The knowledge of darkling things hidden since Creation that Milton asked of the Holy Spirit, however, is now a geographical positioning, in which the King is ‘eminently plac’d’ to survey his Kingdom. As with *Cyder*, it is useful to consider this in relation to Klein’s characterisation of the Atlas as ‘a cartographically constructed image of sovereignty, simultaneously conceived of as a world by itself and a perfect and well-kept estate’, together with his following assertion that ‘The map of the empire and the map of the individual field, the global and the local, act as both imaginary and geographical points of reference for the mapping of national space’.⁶⁹ *The Fleece*, with its chauvinistic anti-French bias, its address to the people of Britain and its global geographical sweep, is very much a nationalistic project operating upon these two scales.

⁶⁹ Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space*, p.81.

Though Dyer's pastoral geography is broader than Philips's pomaceous one, incorporating a swathe of southern England from Dover to Dorchester, the geographical centre of the poem is once again Siluria, the rural heart of England. It is the site of the choicest sheep-grazing pastures that Dyer depicts in Book I, and it is to 'Siluria's flow'ry vales [...] where the first springs arise / Of Britain's happy trade' (*Fl* IV. 692-4) that the poem returns in its closing verse-paragraph. However, unlike Philips, for whom Siluria and Herefordshire are virtual synonyms, Dyer's Siluria is defined in a note to the first book as 'the part of England which lies west of the Severn, viz. Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, etc' (*Fl* I. 57n), and this more incorporative definition allows him to reference Milton's early work, *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle*, performed in Ludlow in 1634.⁷⁰ After several hundred lines of blank verse advice on the care, pasturing and shearing of sheep, the book concludes with a pastoral feast and dialogue between the two shepherds Damon and Colin. These names are venerable within the pastoral tradition. 'Colin' recalls Colin Clout, the central figure of Edmund Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar*, while the name 'Damon' was used in a wide variety of pastoral verse since Virgil, including Milton's own 'Epithium Damonis'. Representative of both the British and the continental pastoral traditions, these names intimate an organic continuity of sheep-farming experience from Augustan Rome to Augustan Britain.

The language of the dialogue borrows from Milton, with description of the first speaker, 'Hoar-headed DAMON, venerable swain, / The soothest shepherd of the flowery vale' (*Fl* I. 630-1), recalling the Attendant Spirit's description of his mentor Meliboeus as 'The soothest Shepherd that ere pip't on plains', while the rural nymphs that assemble 'with

⁷⁰ For notes towards the definition of a distinctively Silurian literature, see Goodridge, *Rural Life*, Appendix A.

light fantastic toe' (*Fl* I. 692) are borrowed from 'L' Allegro'.⁷¹ Most importantly Dyer's entire festal scene, wherein the rural nymphs scatter the surface of the Severn with flowers as an offering to the local goddess Sabrina, draws upon the description of such a festival in *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle*, wherein the shepherds, 'Carrol her goodness lowd in rustic layes, / And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream'.⁷² Milton's poems here are used to evoke an image of Siluria as a pastoral paradise, overwriting the darkness and sexual threat of the original material. In the masque the dark woods of the Welsh Marches are dangerous places, inhabited by a false enchanter and his monstrous rout as well as the faithful shepherds: safety and security belong to the courtly setting of Ludlow Castle where the masque concludes. In *The Fleece*, meanwhile, all sense of danger or sexual threat is exorcised by a substitution of the wild wood for the pastoral landscape.

Praising the merits of the country life, another of Dyer's pastoral speakers asks, 'Is it in cities so? Where, poets tell, / The cries of sorrow sadden all the streets, / And the diseases of intemperate wealth', establishing in place of the dangers of the forest those of the urban landscape. His next remark 'Alas, that any ills from wealth should rise!' (*Fl* I. 643-6) collapses the central debate of *A Mask*, between the luxurious extravagance of Comus and the thrifty austerity of the Lady, into Dyer's own conviction of the co-existence of uprightness and virtue with commerce and industry. Dyer would surely agree with Comus that 'if all the world / Should in a pet of temperance feed on Pulse, / Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but Freize, / Th'all-giver would be unthank't'.⁷³ The benefits of commerce which *The Fleece* praises depends above all on consumers. Dyer's success in placing these principles in

⁷¹ See *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle* in John Milton, *The Complete Works of Milton Volume III: The Shorter Poems*, ed. by Thomas N Corns, Gordon Campbell, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2008). 1.823; 'L' Allegro' in Milton, *The Complete Works of Milton Volume III: The Shorter Poems*. 1.34; a similar line occurs in *A Mask*, 1.144.

⁷² Milton, *A Mask*, ll.849-50.

⁷³ Milton, *A Mask*, ll.720-3.

harmony with one another is what gives conviction to the moment at the conclusion of the first book, when the perspective, as in a cinematic zoom-out, pulls back from the shepherd's feasts to embrace a wider scene.

their little ones
Look on delighted: while the mountain-woods,
And winding vallies, with the various notes
Of pipe, sheep, kine, and birds, and liquid brooks,
Unite their echoes: near at hand the wide
Majestic wave of Severn slowly rolls
Along the deep-divided glebe: the flood,
And trading bark with low contracted sail,
Linger among the reeds and copsy banks
To listen; and to view the joyous scene. (*Fl* I. 711-20)

In this image, the poet's eye views the apparently self-contained pastoral life in its harmony with nature, and catches in its vista the trading bark, the symbol of a wider network beyond, also engaged in viewing the pastoral spectacle and listening to the shepherd's song mingle with the sounds of the natural environment, whose 'various notes' amount almost to a symphony. In John Barrell's reading of the poem, this 'extraordinary sentence' forms

a bold attempt to harmonize the pastoral landscape with the local river which is also the start of the trade route from Siluria to the world, by accommodating the pastoral feast and the trading vessel [...] within the same spatial continuum.⁷⁴

Barrell calls attention to Dyer's endeavours to synthesise different discourses in order to produce a united picture of Britain as a trading nation. The presence of the trading bark on the river, observing the shepherd's feast, acts as a kind of metonym for the trading empire that will export British wool to all corners of the world. Succeeding books will return to the Severn or to Siluria in order to reaffirm their place within the larger networks that the poem describes.

⁷⁴ Barrell, *English Literature in History, 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey*, p.98

Milton's pastoral poetics, combined with Dyer's celebration of trade, produces a poetry full of local detail, which is always looking beyond its borders towards the national or global scales. A typical example is Dyer's description of the Severn, which is far more geographically specific than in *A Mask*. Where Milton simply retells the legend of Sabrina as drawn from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, Dyer conveys geographical knowledge alongside poetic effect, writing of the river's source 'around Plynlymmon's brow' (*Fl* I. 682) together with her sister rivers, the Vaga, the Ryddol, the Clevedoc and the Ystwyth. The 'Commercial Map' was to lay a great deal of emphasis on 'the Courses of [England's] Rivers [...] with the heights of their sides and navigations [...] and where communications should be made from river to river by good roads, or canals'.⁷⁵ In creating this fluid link between the mythological Sabrina and the modern river Severn, Dyer avoids distinguishing between a poetic abstraction and a geographical trading route, mingling pastoral and mercantile elements in his description.

The third book of the poem deals with the production of textiles, sketching a largely northern geography of industry in contrast to the predominantly southern geography of sheep farming in the poem's initial book. This is also the book in which modern sensibilities are most often brought into conflict with Dyer's cheerful view of Britain's growing industrial power. A poet who sees 'busy Leeds, upwafting to the clouds / The incense of thanksgiving' (*Fl* III. 234,6) and who impatiently demands, 'O WHEN through ev'ry province, shall be rais'd / Houses of labor, seats of kind constraint' (*Fl* III. 234-6) comes as a shock to a readership more accustomed to William Blake's 'dark Satanic mills' and the social outrage of Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist*. These passages are also hard to bring into an internally consistent relation with the negative picture of urban life given in the first book where 'cries

⁷⁵ John Dyer, 'Letter to Thomas Edwards' quoted in Humfrey.

of sorrow sadden all the streets, / And the diseases of intemp'rate wealth' and there are 'gardens black with smoke in dusty towns, / Where stenchy vapours often blot the sun' (*Fl* I. 660-1). I would hazard, however, that the smokes and vapours of the towns are to be ascribed to household coal fires rather than the productive fires of industry, and the diseases of the city-dwellers are due to their enjoyment of the dissipating effects of luxury without the invigorating effect of exercise. Dyer's high opinion of the dignity and the moral effect of labour leads him in the third book to elide the division between rural and urban industry, and to present an ideal of factory labour as an untroubled idyll.

The reader is equally likely to be disturbed by Dyer's 'silent joy' in watching 'The younger hands / Ply at the easy work of winding yarn / On swiftly-circling engines, and their notes / Warble together as a choir of larks' (*Fl* I. 281-4): that is, in watching child labourers in the Halifax workhouse. In his reading of this passage, David Fairer astutely catches the Miltonic echo of Adam telling Eve about the 'younger hands' (*PL* IX. 246) that will soon arrive to assist them in returning the wild fertility of Eden to order. 'Behind Dyer's description of the workhouse children' Fairer tells us, 'is a glimpse of Edenic labour, not a georgic struggle with a recalcitrant, fallen nature.'⁷⁶ This view of the workhouse as an Edenic space, where the provision of the necessities of life in exchange for required labour parallels God's requirement that Adam and Eve prune and keep the walks of Paradise goes far towards making sense of Dyer's moral vision. The 'incense of thanksgiving' that arise from Leeds is not so called because the factory smoke is pleasant or sweet-smelling, but because the labourers of the factory workers are pleasing to God.

The third book ends with a catalogue of no less than eighteen British rivers in a kind of paean to Britain's natural infrastructure. Part of the narrative pattern of *The Fleece* is the

⁷⁶ Fairer, "'Where Fuming Trees Refresh the Thirsty Air': The World of Eco-Georgic", p. 205.

narrator's repeated return to Siluria after sketching the boundaries of a new commercial network, in order to reveal how the local landscape of the first book is connected and implicated in the larger dynamics of trade. We see this dynamic in action as Dyer returns to the Severn to describe how 'The northern Cambrians [...] lay their bales / In Salop's streets, beneath whose lofty walls / Pearly Sabrina waits them with her barks' (*Fl* III. 581-9). Enfolded in this catalogue, the Severn retains the poetic name 'Sabrina' and the descriptive adjective 'Pearly', but instead of being a site for a local ritual and pastoral celebration, it is part of the network of wool distribution, a means for conveying goods from the mountains of Wales to the oceanic ports. The 'trading bark' (*Fl* I. 718) that was an incidental detail in the pastoral landscape of book one is now part of the driving force of the catalogue as it sweeps on, enumerating the rivers of Britain and the opportunities they offer to bring goods to market. Returning once again to the site of the pastoral feast in the first book, the poem weaves the pastoral and the mercantile together.

Later in the passage, one of Dyer's signature preoccupations, the necessity of a British canal infrastructure, makes its appearance. The notion floated in the 'Plan for a Commercial Map' that 'the Thames and Trent may be united' (f.42) find a bolder means of expression in Dyer's claim that 'Trent and Severn's wave / By plains alone parted, woo to join / Majestic Thamiz' (*Fl* III. 604-6). In a familiar poeticism used for a very new purpose, the tutelary spirits of the intervening landscape are shown as cheering on the anticipated union of the rivers.

With their silver urns
The nimble-footed Naiads of the springs
Await, upon the dewy lawn, to speed
And celebrate the union, and the light
Wood nymphs; and those, who o'er the grots preside
Whose stores bituminous, with sparkling fires
In summer's tedious absence, cheer the swains [...]
And all the genii of commercial toil.

(*Fl* III. 606-15)

This passage calls strongly to mind the cartographical landscapes attached to the Elizabethan poet Michael Drayton's long poem *Poly-Olbion*, especially given that earlier in the poem, Dyer had paid a specific homage to Drayton, as 'He, whose rustic muse / O'er heath and craggy holt her wing displayed' (*Fl* II. 381-2).⁷⁷ Visually, this passage is not far from Michael Drayton's poetic cartography in *Poly-Olbion*, or the engravings by William Hole which accompanied each song. In these engravings, every hill and river is seen alongside its personified spirit or *genius loci*. The portrayal of these spirits are notably different, however. Drayton's fractious rivers and mountains are perpetually quarrelling with one another, setting forth their respective claims for supremacy in long speeches that recount their importance to local and national history. In *The Fleece* the nymphs and naiads are voiceless, only existing as demi-cartographic resource symbols advocating their own exploitation. Here particularly, the poem is not far from the 'Commercial Map' with its careful labelling of resources and concern for adumbrating Britain's emerging canal infrastructure.

Concluding with the lines, 'What bales, what wealth, what industry, what fleets! / Lo, from the simple fleece how much proceeds' (*Fl* III. 631-2), *The Fleece* follows the wool-trade from a local chorography to a national commercial geography of resources and infrastructure. It remains to be shown how this geography works beyond the borders of Britain, in the second and fourth books of the poem.

Remapping the epic

If the first and third books of *The Fleece* cover much the same territory as the 'Plan for a Commercial Map of England', then as the narrator's prospect extends beyond England's

⁷⁷ For more on *Poly-Olbion* and *The Fleece*, specifically how the poetry of *The Fleece* is 'developed from a Renaissance topos to an extent that Drayton could not have foreseen', see Dustin Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 186–87.

borders in the second and fourth books a new cartographic paradigm must succeed the old.

John Barrell describes the two texts as fundamentally different animals.

If the 'Commercial Map' represents England as a tortoise, its extremities retracted within itself, safe inside its shell, the England of *The Fleece* [...] is an octopus, its tentacles reaching out to embrace every continent on earth.⁷⁸

This octopoid image of a vast network of trading routes conveying English goods to distant lands finds a close cartographical analogue in a contemporary English publication entitled the *Atlas Maritimus et Commercialis*.⁷⁹

Published in 1726, the *Atlas Maritimus* represented a considerable break with its precursors. Whereas most Atlases, however well-subscribed and prodigiously learned, were content to compile, amend and improve the work of previous travellers and geographers, often at enormous length, the *Atlas Maritimus* stands apart by the strength and purpose of its editorial voice and the clear and consistent division of each country or region into three parts: a geographical description, an account of their commerce, and the sailing directions. Dispensing with the elaborate frontispieces and long-winded travel narratives of less selective works such as the *Atlas Geographus* (1710) and the *New General Atlas* (1721), the *Atlas Maritimus* was a practical work designed for use, as the preface announces, by 'Gentlemen, Merchants and Mariners'. The accurate and up-to-date maps and projection were supplied by the astronomer royal, Edmund Halley, whilst Daniel Defoe is widely regarded as having edited the concise prose account of each country's geography and natural resources.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Barrell, 'Afterword'. p.244-5

⁷⁹ Daniel Defoe (attr.), *Atlas Maritimus & Commercialis* (London: 1728).

⁸⁰ The *Atlas Maritimus* does not boast a large critical literature, but there are brief discussions of it in Norman J. Thrower, 'Edmond Halley and Thematic Geo-Cartography', in *The Compleat Plattmaker. Essays on Chart, Map and Globe Making in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by Norman J. Thrower (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978) p.277; and in Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye*, p. 188.

While there is no direct evidence for Dyer having encountered this text, it would have been a logical place for him to turn after Defoe's *A Tour Thro the Whole Island of Great Britain*, a source for much of the topographical information in *The Fleece* and the 'Commercial Map'.⁸¹ The draft preface to the 'Commercial Map' with its concern to 'express the Rivers, and such extension of their Navigations, distinctly and correctly; unobscured by the intersections of needless roads and villages' (f.36) could well have been designed to address the gap in the market left by Defoe's admission that 'we have not given a particular description of any Rivers of *England* but the *Thames*'.⁸² The two authors' opinions often coincide: Defoe's overview of Britain's woollen manufactures is almost a summary of Dyer's theme, as he describes a long list of nations clothed by British wool, from the Spaniards to the native Americans to the nobility and gentry of Persia. He concludes that 'thus the British, or more properly speaking the English Woollen Manufactures, are carry'd to all Parts of the Trading World, and appear to be the most extended Trade of its kind in the Universe'.⁸³ This grand scale and sense of commercial extensiveness will also be a mark of Dyer's poetry. While far from being Dyer's only source on the Grand Canal in China (a rare cross-reference in the 'Commercial Map' (f.39v) reveals Dyers familiarity with Jean Baptiste du Halde's *Description de la Chine* (1736)), Defoe's description of it as 'of its kind the Wonder of the World' parallels Dyers own admiration.⁸⁴

When *The Fleece* turns to describe its author's attempts to produce a work for the betterment of mankind, Dyer portrays himself as not only impelled to learn of sheep but also the art of navigation.

By this impell'd, the shepherd's hut I seek [...]
Or turn the compass o'er the painted chart

⁸¹ For Dyer's topographical models, see Goodridge, *Rural Life*, p.176.

⁸² Daniel Defoe (attr.), *Atlas Maritimus & Commercialis* (London: 1728), p.ii.

⁸³ Defoe, *Atlas Maritimus*, p.101.

⁸⁴ Defoe, *Atlas Maritimus*, p.199.

To mark the ways of traffic; Volga's stream,
Cold Hudson's cloudy streights, warm Afric's cape,
Latium's firm road, the Ptolomean fosse,
And China's long canals; those noble works,
Those high effects of civilising trade,
Employ me, sedulous of public weal. (*Fl* II. 505-15)

The charts accompanying the *Atlas Maritimus* would have been of assistance to the poet in at least the first three of these endeavours: mapping the flow of the Volga into the Caspian sea, the course of the Hudson towards New York harbour and the Cape of Good Hope—all prominent trading routes. For Denis Cosgrove, Halley's maps characterise 'the revived oceanic vision that emerged from the competition of maritime commercial empires', and the painstaking work of the Astronomer Royal in accurately listing the latitude and longitude of the major ports reflects Dyer's own preoccupation with accurate mapping, his enthusiasm for maritime commerce, and his Whiggish view of future progress.⁸⁵ It is fitting then that Dyer's first serious endeavour at taking his poem beyond the shores of Great Britain is not only nautical but epic in theme.

In the midst of Book II of *The Fleece* is a mini-epic, which reinterprets the myth of the Golden Fleece as an allegory for the progress of sheep farming in the ancient world. The story of the Argonaut's voyage to Colchis is taken from a classical source, the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes, but despite a lack of concrete borrowings the poetry is distinctively Miltonic. It may well be described as an epic entirely recast into the mode of one of Milton's occasional naval similes, such as when he describes Satan approaching Eden:

As when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
Sabea odours from the spicy shore
Of Arabie the blest (*PL* IV. 159-63)

⁸⁵ Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye*, p. 188.

As with Philip's use of the 'barbaric pearl and gold' of Satan's throne in order to describe the colonial spoils returning to Britain, the Satanic associations of these similes are forgotten, replaced by Dyer's sense of trade as a universal good.

The key features of Dyer's retelling of the *Argonautica* are speed and condensation. Metrically, the verse is full of enjambment as it speeds from one exotic place name to the next, and incidents such as the breaking of Hercules' oar, which occasion lengthy episodes in the *Argonautica*, are passed over in four and a half lines. The focus of the poem is not on the rowers but on the passage of the Argo:

Wide abroad
Expands the purple deep: the cloudy isles,
Scyros, and Scopelos, and Icos, rise
And Halonesos: soon huge Lemnos heaves
Her azure head above the level brine,
Shakes off her mists, and brightens all her cliffs:
While them her flatt'ring creeks and op'ning bow'rs
Cautious approaching, in Myrina's port
Cast out the cabled stone upon the strand. (*Fl* II. 240-8)

This detailed account of the Argo's course makes it easy to follow Dyer's route on a map, and the onward motion of the verse itself seems to parallel the speed of an eye wandering across the map rather than the lived experience of a long sea voyage, with its changes of weather and alternations between day and night. Even the Symplegades, or Wandering Rocks, a mythological detail taken from Homer and here identified with the Bosphorus, fail to delay the passage of the Argonauts for longer than five lines. The Argo swiftly reaches Colchis, a city whose original trade decays even while its inhabitants enjoy lavish entertainments and luxuries.

Griffin is puzzled by the fact that once this foreign port is reached, the traditional heroic deeds with which the luxurious King Aeetes tests Jason are done away with altogether. His seduction of Medea, distraction of the dragon Hydrus and final escape occur in the blink

of an eye: it takes less than ten lines for the Argonauts to steal the golden fleece and return to Italy. This proves, he believes, that ‘The heroic tale has a bathetic end’ and reflects Dyer’s own ambivalence to Jason’s suitability as commercial paragon.⁸⁶ This reading, I think, overstates the self-containment of the mini-epic within the poem. Heroic action does not have a high place in the poetry of commerce; as Dyer tells us in the opening of Book III, ‘the rage / Of horrid war’ (*Fl* III. 10) is not his theme. The focus is not on Jason as a figure of heroic endeavour (indeed, he does not have a speaking role and is named only twice within the passage) but on the Argo itself as the prototype of all the future commercial voyages. If we accept this reading, the Argo episode does not break off bathetically, but blends seamlessly into the progress poem that follows. In this narration, King Aetes’ Black Sea Empire, enervated by luxury, decays into ruin, while rich wool-trading colonies spread across the entire Mediterranean basin. Sheep-farming survives the fall of Rome to flourish in India, Africa, Spain—and most importantly of all, in Britain, where Dyer stages another return to Siluria, this time as the end-point of a historical network. In this respect, Dyer part-adopts and part-revises a reading of the myth that dates back to the writings of Seneca in Imperial Rome, where Argo is seen as ‘the mother of all merchant ships’, whose passage from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea marks the division between the pastoral idyll of ‘the ages our forefathers saw’ to a modern epoch strikingly like our own, where ‘All boundaries are gone, the cities / have set up their walls in new lands: / the world is a thoroughfare, nothing remains / where it was.’⁸⁷ In Dyer’s work, however, Seneca’s nostalgia for the lost golden age before the hectic days of Roman globalisation is abandoned, together with Milton’s association of sea-trading with Satanic journeying. Here, the mythical advent of international commerce is

⁸⁶ Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, p. 201.

⁸⁷ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Medea in Six Tragedies*, trans. by Emily Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), ll.329 & 369-72. The phrase ‘mother of all merchant ships’ is borrowed from Gillies, *Shakespeare and the geography of difference*, p. 24.

figured as not only beneficial, but almost providential in establishing the wool trade that would bring Britain such riches. The pastoral chorography of Siluria is not replaced by the networked commercial geography but merely absorbed into its web.⁸⁸

If the Argo episode uses the language of *Paradise Lost* to write a mini-epic wedded firmly to the geographical and cartographical journey rather than the cosmographical wanderings of Milton's Satan, it is tempting to look at the progress poem that follows as a reworking of Milton's sequel, *Paradise Regained*: specifically, to the events of Books III and IV, where Satan carries Jesus up to the summit of a mountain to tempt him successively with power over the great civilisations of the ancient world. Dyer's pan-Mediterranean muse is not anchored to a mountain-top, or to a single time-period, but it shares the same expanse of vision with *Paradise Regained*. Its four-book structure may conceivably have brought it to Dyer's mind as he wrote his own four-book poem, drawing for inspiration on the two premier four-book poems of antiquity: *The Argonautica* and the *Georgics*.⁸⁹

Milton's austere rejection of the achievements of the Roman Empire and the learning of ancient Athens in favour of a rigorously Christian worldview has troubled humanist critics, and Dyer's resurveying of the same ground in *The Fleece*, in the absence of any direct quotation, can be read primarily as a repudiation.⁹⁰ Where Milton's Jesus rejected all Satan's offers of temporal power for an ambiguous spiritual triumph, Dyer adopts the wider temporal perspective of the progress poem, and with it the ideas of inevitable progression that

⁸⁸ In other words, the passage is as much about *translatio ovii* as it is *translatio imperii*.

⁸⁹ Critics who have argued for such structural influences between the *Georgics* and *Paradise Regained*, or between *Paradise Regained* and later four-book poems include Anthony Low, 'Milton, *Paradise Regained*, and *Georgic*', *PMLA*, 98 (1983), 152–69; and Stuart Curran, 'The Mental Pinnacle: *Paradise Regained* and the Romantic Four-Book Epic', in *Calm of Mind: Tercentenary Essays on Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes in Honor of John S. Diekhoff*, ed. by Joseph A Wittreich Jr., James G Taaffe, and Jane Cerny (The press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971), pp. 133–62.

⁹⁰ Particularly useful on this subject is Stanley Fish, *How Milton Works* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

characterise Whig historiography. Where Jesus, foreseeing the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, demands ‘What wise and valiant man would seek to free / These thus degenerate, by themselves enslav’d / Or could of inward slaves made outward free?’ (*PR* IV. 144-6), Dyer adopts a more sympathetic tone, mourning ‘the majesty of ancient Rome / The throng of heroes in her splendid streets / The snowy vest of peace, or purple robe [...] All in the solitude of ruin lost, / War’s horrid carnage, vain ambition’s dust’ (*Fl* II. 331-8). Notably, while ‘the Brittish west’ (*PR* IV. 77) in *Paradise Regained* is dismissed in a passing half-line, Dyer, admitting that in ancient times ‘only tin / To late improv’d Britannia gave renown’ (*Fl* II. 326-7) still concludes his progress poem with Britain, its wool trade having progressed since the days of Edgar, first King of England to the point where it is part of a trading power that spans the globe.⁹¹ *Paradise Regained* leaves Britain on the far edge of the Roman imperial map, but in *The Fleece* Dyer secures his country at the very centre of a commercial atlas.⁹²

In the last book of the poem, this commercial geography is outlined on the largest possible scale. After opening with a description of a fleet of merchant vessels leaving the Thames, the passage of the muse becomes conflated for long periods with that of a trading ship as the poem journeys from port to port across Europe, Africa, Asia and North and South America. ‘The whole globe / Is now, of commerce, made the scene immense’ (*Fl* IV. 168-9), Dyer tells us, demonstrating an early form of globalisation in his description of the scope of Britain’s wool trade. Returning again to places familiar from *Paradise Lost*, such as ‘Ormus’,

⁹¹ In the footnotes to the above edition, we are told that this line refers to Armorica (Brittany), not Britain. This seems ambiguous at the least. It is true that Britain was not part of the Roman Empire until the reign of Claudius, some ten years after the events of *Paradise Regained*, but then neither was India or much of Germania, both mentioned in the same passage. Alastair Fowler’s 1998 edition leaves the line unglossed.

⁹² It is interesting to note that the first edition to incorporate a map, Charles Dunster’s second edition of 1800, leaves Britain out of the ‘Map of Places mentioned in the *Paradise Regained*’ while being careful to incorporate India and the golden Chersoness, both given passing mentions in the same passage.

‘Ternante and Tidore’ and ‘Sophala, thought Ophir’, the poem maps Miltonic geography onto the commercial atlas. As with Philips, the Satanic associations of Milton’s metaphors of trade are absorbed into the commercial poem without their diabolical context, but Dyer also works to distinguish the perspective of the georgic muse from that of the Satanic observer. The poem’s progress follows that of the trading ship or the overland caravan, experiencing the climates and conditions that those vehicles pass through. It is notable that the poetic perspective never ascends into the cosmographic spaces prominent in the description of Satan’s circumnavigations of Earth during his absence from Eden, when ‘The space of seven continued nights he rode / With darkness, thrice the equinoctial line / He circled, four times crossed the car of Night / From pole to pole, traversing each colure’ (*PL IX*. 63-6). In fact, Dyer’s poetry never makes use of such cosmographic terms, and does not even observe such common shipboard distinctions as the crossing of the line. The only point where he draws a distinguishing line across his geography is with the verse ‘Now to the other hemisphere, my muse’ (*Fl IV*. 493) where Dyer observes an entirely artificial distinction between eastern and western hemispheres that only exists as a cartographical convention—something Milton, whose perception of the world was not centered on the British Isles, would never do. Dyer’s muse roams an essentially cartographical space divorced from the alternation of daylight and darkness and the change of the seasons.

Lest the spreading of trading links across this space should seem too easy a progress for a true georgic, the sublime threat of the cosmographic spaces known from *Paradise Lost* is mapped onto marine geography, as we see in the description of a portion of the circumnavigation of George Anson, undertaken from 1740 to 1744. Having set out with seven ships, and returning in only one vessel bearing less than half his crew, Anson’s enterprise was one which trod the line between heroism and disaster, and only came down on the former side thanks to Anson’s capture of a Spanish treasure galleon. Having reached the

forbidding coasts of Patagonia in his progression, Dyer takes the opportunity to describe Anson contending with a storm.

all around
Whirlwind, and snow, and hail, and horror: now,
Rapidly, with the world of waters, down
Descending to the terrors of the deep,
He viewed the uncover'd bottom of the abyss
And now the stars, upon the loftiest point
Toss'd of the sky-mix'd surges[...]
While flames, quick-flashing through the gloom, reveal'd
Ruins of decks and shrouds, and sights of death. (*FI* IV. 605-14)

There is a clear echo here of Satan's journey into Chaos in book two, where 'plumb down he drops / Ten thousand fathom deep' (*PL* II. 933-4) before the blast of an explosive cloud shoots him 'As many miles aloft' (*PL* II. 938), while the fitfully illumined carnage of the ship's deck recalls the 'darkness visible' and 'shades of death' of Hell itself. Griffin's argument that 'Dyer is signaling—perhaps unconsciously—his disquiet at the buccaneering Anson' is convincing in this context, especially as Anson's voyage reverses Dyer's own course in more than one way.⁹³ There is both admiration and aversion in Dyer's description of Anson's counter-clockwise journey around the world in pursuit of war and treasure, in contrast with Dyer's clockwise progress in search of trading opportunities. There may also be an implied censure in the fact that Dyer's trading vessels round the Cape of Good Hope and pass through other notoriously perilous waters without suffering so sublime an encounter with storm and ruin.

The peaceable vision that succeeds this episode is that of a future commercial network where, if Britain avoids the trap of neglecting the labour of commerce and falling into luxurious decadence, her dominance will extend even to the coasts of California and Japan. War is apparently abolished, for it is Britain's delight 'To fold the world in harmony and

⁹³ Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, p.202.

spread / Among the habitations of mankind, / The various wealth of toil' (*Fl* IV. 665-7). The vision of commerce replacing naval force in the exploration of the oceans is cemented by the way in which commercial expansion is allied to the correction and extension of the marine commercial atlas, to the point where 'ev'ry variation shall be told / Of the magnetic steel, and currents marked / That drive the heedless vessel from her course' (*Fl* IV. 680-2). In contrast with the storms, fire and death that characterize Anson's voyage against the Spanish, this vision of the progress achieved through commerce is of accurate charting and managed risks—a safer, if less glorious, ocean.

The poem completes its global circumnavigation and concludes with the last of its sequential returns to Siluria.

Mean while, with weary wing
 O'er ocean's wave returning, she explores
 Siluria's flow'ry vales, her old delight,
 The shepherd's haunts, where the first springs arise
 Of Britain's happy trade, now spreading wide,
 Wide as th'Atlantic or Pacific seas,
 Or as air's vital fluid o'er the globe. (*Fl* IV. 690-6)

'With weary wing'—that is, with a respectable georgic weariness that contrasts with the boundaries that Satan, the great transgressor, overleaps with too much ease—the labouring muse returns to her Silurian heartland. Where in the first book, the commercial networks surrounding the pastoral chorography had been hinted at only briefly in the figure of the trading bark on the river, at the poem's conclusion we can place it in the centre of a vast commercial edifice, as widespread as water or air. Where John Philips failed to convince when he attempted to extend the chorography of *Cyder* across a global scale, Dyer succeeds in combining a georgic and pastoral chorography with a commercial geography, in part through an assimilation of Milton's early pastoral poetry with his later epic manner.

Conclusion

The problem of how to write poetry after Milton was one that troubled the poem's very earliest critic, Andrew Marvell, who was jealous that some less skillful writer 'Might hence presume the whole creation's day / To change in scenes, and show it in a play'.⁹⁴ Marvell's prophecy was duly fulfilled by John Dryden's *The State of Innocence and the Fall of Man*, and early Miltonic imitation turned the grand scale of *Paradise Lost* into the overblown stuff of panegyric verses.⁹⁵ John Philips proved to be a pioneer in the endeavor to bring Miltonic style down from its high plane of cosmographical, biblical sublimity and deploy it on the local, chorographic scale of the georgic. His remapping of Milton was also an act of political appropriation, repurposing a republican writer's voice to the description of a Royalist landscape, and his contribution in popularising blank verse and rendering it a suitable medium for the emerging tradition of English landscape poetry should not be underestimated.

Philips's poetry faltered, however, when it came to expanding his local chorography onto a national or international scale. John Dyer's *The Fleece* represents the most thorough and determined attempt to remap Miltonic cosmography onto the scale of eighteenth-century commercial geography, enshrining Siluria as an ideal pastoral chorography in the centre of the map and then using the epic language of Milton to describe the various national, international and historical trading networks of which Siluria was part. In contrast to writers like William Cowper, Edward Young and William Wordsworth, whose adaptations of Milton turned inwards to describe their lives and meditations, Philips and Dyer remapped Milton onto the world around them, adapting and transforming Milton's epic poem into a suitable

⁹⁴ Andrew Marvell 'On Mr. Milton's poem of *Paradise Lost*' in *The Complete Poems*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), ll.21-3.

⁹⁵ See Nicholas Von Maltzahn, 'The War in Heaven and the Miltonic Sublime', in *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration*, ed. by Alan Houston and Steven Pincus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 154–79.

medium for portraying the landscapes, processes and trading routes of the eighteenth-century world.

Chapter 2: Mapping *The Seasons*.

John Philips was the first to adapt Milton's blank verse to the demands of eighteenth-century expression, but its popularity as a verse form is chiefly due to the enormous commercial success and lasting influence of James Thomson's *The Seasons*.¹ Like *Paradise Lost*, *The Seasons* attempts the task of justifying God's ways to man, in Thomson's case through a global survey of nature throughout the changing seasons. However, if John Dyer's *The Fleece* views Britain and the world in an explicitly cartographical manner, *The Seasons* is notable for the ways in which it resists such a reading. While not a formal georgic in the sense in which *Cyder* and *The Fleece* mirrored the structure and agriculturally didactic purpose of Virgil's *Georgics*, *The Seasons* can be described as an informal georgic that participates in the celebration of labour and the productive landscape. Written in four books, each celebrating a different season, together with a concluding hymn to the Deity, the poem covers a vast range of different topics. In fact, critics since Samuel Johnson have singled out the poem's greatest defect as want of method—a lack of structural connection between the various subjects that Thomson surveys in each book of the poem. Even those who, like Ralph Cohen, defend the artistic consistency of the poem on the grounds that 'the poet's awe of God's power, wisdom and benevolence are repeated in each season, providing a thematic unity', admit that the poem's loose structure allows new passages to be inserted almost at will, as Thomson frequently did during a lengthy and involved process of revision.²

Of course, this is not to say that Thomson's verse is inferior to Dyer's because it is less like a map. Rather, it is proper to acknowledge that the poem's central structural idea—that of exhibiting the effect on the landscape and the individual of each of the seasons in

¹ See Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*, p.124.

² Ralph Cohen, *The Unfolding of 'The Seasons'* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), p. 94.

turn—is not a cartographic one. The cartographic method of presenting the contours of an essential landscape that remains unchanged, no matter what plants are blooming or what the weather conditions are, would be totally unsuited to Thomson’s subject. Hence, Thomson’s work marks a turn towards the aesthetic, and the dominant visual paradigm within the poem is landscape painting rather than maps. Thomson’s poetry is full of space and the experience of landscape; yet rather than the definite spatial transitions between named locations that Dyer’s poetry exhibits, Thomson’s verse frequently exhibits a more associative method of progression.

Despite this apparent spatial disconnection, Thomson’s landscapes have often been subject to political interpretations. W.B. Hutchings has concisely explained the central premises of this type of criticism.

Because a description of a prospect cannot simply replicate that prospect (and what would be the point even if it could?), its semantic function is seen to lie elsewhere—in confirmation or subversion of modes of ownership, control and authority; just as landscape itself, the object of artistic ordering via that quintessentially eighteenth-century art of landscape gardening, is implicit with statements of political and social theory.³

For *The Seasons*, the two founding formulations of this kind of criticism are Ralph Cohen’s *The Unfolding of the Seasons* (1975) and John Barrell’s *English Literature in History 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey* (1983).⁴ Both works were interested in the way Thomson’s landscapes embody the political assumptions of the era, with Cohen identifying Thomson’s vision of the landscape with that of the country-house proprietor and Barrell extending this concept to show how the poem’s voice, allied with a disinterested land-owning class, holds

³ W. B. Hutchings, ““Can Pure Description Hold the Place of Sense?”: Thomson’s Landscape Poetry”, in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. by Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 44.

⁴ Cohen, *Unfolding of the Seasons*; John Barrell, *English Literature in History, 1730-80 : An Equal, Wide Survey* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983).

possible contradictions at bay in order to present a unifying vision of a harmonious Britain. Tim Fulford's *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (1996) proceeds from a deeper understanding of Thomson's contemporary political allegiances.⁵ With the aid of Christine Gerrard's *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry and National Myth, 1725-42*, which identified Thomson convincingly as a member of the anti-Walpole Patriot opposition, Fulford shows how Thomson's landscapes, particularly in later revisions of *The Seasons*, are influenced by his political stance.⁶

The political view is the dominant spatial reading of Thomson, but others are not hard to find. Katarina Maria Stenke has explored the significance of the labyrinth in Thomson's poetry, whilst in a recent doctoral thesis Tess Somervell has argued that Thomson gives his readers the choice of experiencing his landscapes through either a temporal or a spatial paradigm.⁷

As I do not believe that *The Seasons* can be helpfully paired with a work of eighteenth-century cartography, as in the previous chapter, this chapter investigates the hidden logic of Thomson's spatiality through digitally mapping recognisable geographical references throughout the poem—first within the context of the British Isles, and then abroad. Such a reading will reinforce Cohen and Barrell's concept of the centrality of the country house to *The Seasons*, but will also draw attention to a number of previously neglected

⁵ Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth*. Glynis Ridley performs a similar critical endeavor to Fulford on the smaller scale of the gardens at Stowe in 'The Seasons and the Politics of Opposition' in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. by Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

⁶ Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁷ Katarina Maria Stenke, "'Devolving through the Maze of Eloquence': James Thomson's *The Seasons* and the Eighteenth-Century Verse Labyrinth", 39.1 (2016); Tess Somervell, 'Reading Time in *Paradise Lost*, *The Seasons*, and *The Prelude*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2015), particularly chapter 3.

features, such as Thomson's imaginative fascination with the northern isles of Britain. Meanwhile, a series of charts will help to keep track of the textual differences between the original edition of *The Seasons* and Thomson's final revised version, as well as between the different books of the poem. Constant in all editions of the poem, of course, is Thomson's praise for Milton and his allusions to *Paradise Lost*. Milton's influence on his poetry was marked even in the earliest days of his poetic career, and Thomson was able to turn it to political, as well as poetical, purposes.

Thomson and Milton

James Thomson unquestionably owed a great deal of his blank verse style to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, as Raymond Dexter Havens showed in *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*.⁸ *The Seasons* also contains multiple echoes of Milton's minor poetry, and David Anderson and David Stuart Reid have argued persuasively for the influence of 'Il Penseroso', Milton's great poem in praise of melancholic reverie, as a structural model for 'a poem that revolves the world in the mind according to a loose, associative train of thought, undetermined except by its own motions' rather than one which follows a clear narrative path like *Paradise Lost*.⁹ *The Seasons* was able to intermix the structure of 'Il Penseroso' with a perspective that alternates between the personal and the global. Unlike Philips, Thomson was also able to accommodate Milton's politics to his own political beliefs. By the 1730s, and with the aid of a certain amount of misreading, Milton had become one of the idols of the political opposition.

⁸ Havens, *Influence of Milton*, pp. 123-48.

⁹ David Stuart Reid, 'Thomson's Poetry of Reverie and Milton', *SEL*, 43.3 (2003), 667-682 (p. 668). See also David R. Anderson, 'Milton's Influence on Thomson: The Uses of Landscape', *Milton Studies*, 1981, 107-20.

Like many poets of the time, James Thomson started by writing verse that flattered the Prime Minister, Robert Walpole—then, embittered by the lack of remuneration from Walpole, switched sides and began to write for the political opposition, becoming part of a group dubbed as the Patriots. G.F. Sensabaugh long ago explored the post-Restoration rehabilitation of Milton’s reputation in *That Grand Whig Milton*, which described Milton’s trajectory from irredeemable Republican menace to one of the icons at the heart of the emerging Whig party.¹⁰ In *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, meanwhile, Christine Gerrard has noted that the new popularity of the Miltonic style following the success of *The Seasons* allowed blank verse to emerge as a kind of house style for writers for the anti-Walpole opposition.¹¹ Milton would never be more important to Thomson’s self-presentation than in 1737, when two pamphlets were published containing a short piece by each author. These can be read as attempts to draw on the rising reputation of Thomson, and the settled reputation of Milton, in order to address political issues. They can also be read as an ingenious cross-promotion strategy on behalf of Thomson’s publisher, Andrew Millar.

The first pamphlet to appear was a reprint of Milton’s *Areopagitica*, with a new preface by James Thomson, which was published in January 1737.¹² This publication is often seen as part of the debate surrounding the Theatrical Licensing Act, which gave Walpole’s government powers over stage censorship. However, the pamphlet in fact appears six months after the Act received the Royal Assent and was passed into law, making it curiously belated as a political intervention.¹³ I believe it can be more creditably read as an attempt to raise

¹⁰ G. F. Sensabaugh, *That Grand Whig Milton* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1952).

¹¹ Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition*.

¹² This is the first time *Areopagitica* is republished in a single volume. For a wider view of the presence of *Areopagitica* in eighteenth-century political writing, see G. F. Sensabaugh, ‘Adaptations of *Areopagitica*’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 13.2 (1950), 201–5.

¹³ The chronology listed here was assembled with reference to Vincent J. Liesenfeld, *The Licensing Act of 1737* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); James Sambrook, *James Thomson (1700-1748): A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and to the *Agamemnon* manuscript preserved in the Huntington Library, which includes a note to the censor from the manager of the

awareness of Thomson's principles as an advocate of freedom of the press before the anticipated censorship of his tragedy, *Agamemnon*, which was submitted to the new theatrical censor in the same month as *Areopagitica* was republished. In the event, *Agamemnon* reached the stage almost unaltered by the censor, and Thomson would not achieve the blaze of publicity attendant on having a play banned from the stage until *Edward and Eleonora* the following year.¹⁴

Thomson's preface is unusually bold in the rhetorical posture of declaring its own irrelevance and inferiority to the matter it prefates.

There is no need of a Preface to recommend this admirable Defence of the best of human Rights, to any one who has ever heard of the DIVINE MILTON: And it is impossible to produce better arguments, or to set them in a more convincing, awakening light.¹⁵

Thomson's attitude towards Milton may be contrasted with Philips's of twenty years earlier. Rather than criticise Milton's republican views, or even acknowledge them, the 'Divine Milton' is immediately set above all criticism in a way that accords with Lucy Newlyn's account of how Milton became an avatar of his own sublimity, 'a model of "deified" authority which is unparalleled in English Literary History.'¹⁶ Milton's reputation alone is sufficient to recommend *Areopagitica* to the discerning reader. The circumstances of Milton's original composition are never referred to, and the argument of the introduction is simply to state in broad terms the principle of freedom of the press, seen as closely allied to Protestantism and liberty, and to characterise the alternative as chains and slavery.

Drury Lane on the flyleaf, dated Jan: 14th: 1737. See James Thomson, 'The Death of Agamemnon' (Los Angeles, Huntington Library, Larpent MS 4).

¹⁴ See Alan Dugald McKillop, 'Thomson and the Licensers of the Stage', *Philological Quarterly*, 37 (1958), 448–53.

¹⁵ John Milton, *Areopagitica* (London, 1737), p.iii.

¹⁶ Newlyn, *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader*, p. 4.

The second pamphlet was the pseudo-Miltonic *Manifesto of the Lord Protector*, which was bound with Thomson's early blank verse poem, *Britannia* and republished in March 1738. The *Manifesto* was originally published in Latin in 1655, as part of the justifications for Oliver Cromwell's planned war with Spain. The attribution to Milton, resting largely on the matter of his Latin style and the circumstantial evidence of his role as Latin Secretary, is now thought dubious.¹⁷ What matters for our purposes, however, is that the *Manifesto* was thought of as Milton's, and thereby gained a political and commercial value that could not be put on an anonymous Protectorate pamphlet. As for Thomson's *Britannia*, the poem was first published in 1727 and described the lament of the goddess Britannia for the failure of the British to protect their naval dominion against Spanish depredations. The poem ends with Britannia forsaking the shoreline and seeking out the 'awful Senate' or Parliament, where she promises to 'Burn in the Patriot's thought, flow from his tongue / In fearless truth': in other words, to inspire the rhetoric of the opposition against Walpole in the House of Commons.¹⁸ While the pamphlet contains no new material, its republication at a fraught time for British-Spanish relations constitutes a political statement. The *Manifesto* aligns Milton and Thomson as authors whose works were hostile to Spanish naval power and prophetic of the approaching conflict with Spain that would later come to be known as the War of Jenkins' Ear.

These pamphlets also serve to publicise a more ambitious undertaking: *A Complete Collection of the Historical, Political and Miscellaneous Works of Mr. John Milton*, advertised in *Areopagitica* and published at the same time as the *Manifesto* in March 1738.

¹⁷ It has not been included in a modern edition of Milton's prose works following its ejection from the Yale Prose Works by J. Max Patrick. See John Milton, *CPW*, Vol. V, pp.711-2; and Robert T. Fallon, *Milton in Government* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993). For a recent reconsideration, cautiously in favour of Milton's authorship, see Willy Maley, 'Peninsula Lost: Mapping Milton's Celtiberian Cartographies', *Sederi*, 24 (2014), 69–93.

¹⁸ James Thomson, *Britannia* in *Poetical Works*, ed. J. Logie Robertson, ll.293-4.

Only the second collected edition of Milton's prose after John Toland's 1699 edition, the work was introduced and edited by Thomas Birch, a scholar already on Millar's payroll for his work in translating and editing the *General Dictionary* of Pierre Bayle. Millar took an active role in shaping the volume of Milton's works, recommending the *Manifesto* to Birch as a piece that was probably Milton's, and stating his desire to publish it separately.¹⁹ In Millar's advertisements, the works of John Milton are drawn up beside those of James Thomson, as well as other radical political writers such as the republican James Harrington. By encouraging Thomson's political engagement against Walpole's government, Millar elevated Thomson's poems to a place alongside these political heavyweights. Whether his motives were commercial or political, he succeeded both in marketing Thomson as a politically engaged and coherent writer, and in using his mounting reputation as a blank verse poet in order to map Milton's political pamphlets, written during the Protectorate, onto contemporary political issues.

Thomson's references to Milton in *The Seasons* are less politically fraught. Towards the close of a long list of Whiggish English worthies in *Summer*, Thomson asks 'Is not each great, each amiable muse / Of classic ages in thy Milton met?' (*Summer*, 1567-8). Thomson follows John Dryden's famous epigram in describing Milton as a poet who incorporates and surpasses the classical tradition of Virgil and Homer. Another Dryden-inspired tableau of the 'Three Poets, in three distant ages born' occurs in *Winter*.²⁰ Thomson indicates Milton's dual allegiance, as an integral part of both the English and the classical tradition, by closing a list

¹⁹ Unpublished letter from Andrew Millar to Thomas Birch, 27 January 1738: 'This tract ab^t y^e depredations of y^e Spaniards is, I am very assured, Milton's & if you think so I w^d have it printed. I know such a thing was published by him, for I have been often advised to have it translated & published at this Juncture.' BL Add MS 4314, f.39. Birch concurred that the work was probably Milton's. In the same volume is a receipt of Millar's payments to Birch for his work on the letter 'M' of the *General Dictionary*. For the entry on Milton, Birch would provide an abbreviated version of his prefatory life in the *Complete Collection*.

²⁰ John Dryden, 'Epigram' in John T. Shawcross, *Milton: The Critical Heritage* Vol.1, p.97

of Greek and Roman worthies with Milton joining Homer and Virgil for a scene where ‘join’d hand in hand they walk / Darkling, full up the middle steep to fame.’²¹ Where Philips’s endorsement of Milton was filled with reservations, Thomson claims Milton wholeheartedly as a literary and political precursor. Much of this, however, is done through the sublimation of Milton into a catalogue of English or classical worthies as an emblematic figure, rather than going into the details of Milton’s republican sympathies. He was happy to praise *Areopagitica*, a work that cleaved closely to his own principles, but it is hard to imagine him lavishing the same praise of the ‘Divine Milton’ on works that would still have been controversial, such *Eikonoklastes*, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* or *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*.

The Seasons at Home

By mentioning Milton twice in *The Seasons*, Thomson repaid his debt to him with handsome praise. Neither was he niggardly in acknowledging his debt to John Philips, hailing ‘Philips, Pomona’s bard! the second thou / Who nobly durst in rhyme-unfettered verse / With British freedom sing the British song— / How from Silurian vats high-sparkling wines / Foam in transparent floods’ (*Autumn*, 645-9). Taking up Milton’s own description of his poem as ‘an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming’, Thomson authors his own place alongside Philips in an invented tradition of British writers whose song embodies both national freedom and a national cultural identity.²² The more specific reference to ‘Silurian vats’ is secondary, almost an afterthought, and Thomson’s verse never again engages with Herefordshire or the

²¹ James Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), *Winter*, ll.535-6. All further references to this poem will be given parenthetically.

²² John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Alastair Fowler, (Longman: London, 1976), p. 39. Thomson ignores the fact that Philips’s Tory ideology contradicts his Whig beliefs.

wider Silurian sphere, as Dyer would in *The Fleece*. In fact, throughout the poem, references to specific mappable places are surprisingly thin on the ground. Compared to *Cyder*, the most famous nature poem of the eighteenth century has little local detail.

This is not to say the poem lacks close observation, and the skill with which Thomson differentiates different breeds of flowers and evokes a variety of scales from the broad prospect to microscopic observation has been justly celebrated. It is simply that there is nothing within the poem on the scale of John Dyer's grand catalogues of rivers, woods, mountains of the British landscape, nor with his evocation of Britain's emerging industrial landscape. As Dustin Griffin has noted, landscape description within Thomson 'is generic rather than particularized – it could fit hundreds of prospects throughout England and Scotland – [which] only makes it more available to the self-consciously "British" reader as patriotic sentiment'.²³ Thomson's poetry features multiple woods and glades, for example, but not a single named forest.

Intellectually, as Gerald Carruthers notes, Thomson's approach to nature draws on a variety of sources.

[Thomson's] landscape is construed from a wide but catholic range of classic Greek and Roman ideas about nature which are set in a largely Miltonic field of rhetoric and theocentricity and intensified by a Newtonian awareness.²⁴

This dense statement of Thomson's theoretical indebtedness in his approach to landscape highlights the poet's ability to synthesise different literary and philosophical material rather than to perceive and record nature in an entirely original way. Philips had already shown Thomson the way in which Virgilian structures and ideas of nature could be clothed in a Miltonic rhetoric. Thomson, as Marjorie Hope Nicholson has noted, takes the lead in

²³ Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry*, p. 80.

²⁴ Gerald Carruthers, 'James Thomson and Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literary Identity', in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. by Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 174.

poeticising Newton's optical and physical discoveries, and we will see in a later chapter how Elizabeth Carter and Anna Letitia Barbauld extend Thomson's work in this area through their astronomical poetry.²⁵

Thomson's scientific engagement, as well as his geographical references, are developed and elaborated over the course of several decades and multiple editions of *The Seasons*. The poem has a complicated textual history, with *Winter*, *Spring* and *Summer* appearing as separate publications before the first combined edition of 1730 brought the four seasons together. Thomson would later make numerous revisions to the poem and extend it radically in 1744, but this essay will deal with the two farthest ends of the revisionary process: the original 1730 edition and the final 1746 edition of *The Seasons* which Thomson published shortly before his death. It is the latter which has been taken as the base text for every scholarly edition of Thomson, although editorial machinery does exist to help the previous editions of *The Seasons* emerge from behind their successor.

In the fourteen years between these two editions, the number of identifiable places within the British Isles more than doubles, from fifteen in 1730 to thirty-two in 1746 (fig.1). This represents a significant increase, but they still do not form a sizeable entity in a poem of over five thousand lines. I have included as a means of contrast data collected from Book 1 of John Dyer's *The Fleece*, which covers a similar spread of terrain, and mentions thirty-five place names in only 720 lines of verse—more than in the whole of *The Seasons*.

²⁵ Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Newton Demands the Muse: Newton's Opticks and the Eighteenth Century Poets* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966). For more on Thomson and Newton, see Philip Connell, 'Newtonian Physico-Theology and the Varieties of Whiggism in James Thomson's *The Seasons*', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 72.1 (2009), 1–28; Alan Dugald McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's 'Seasons'* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1942).

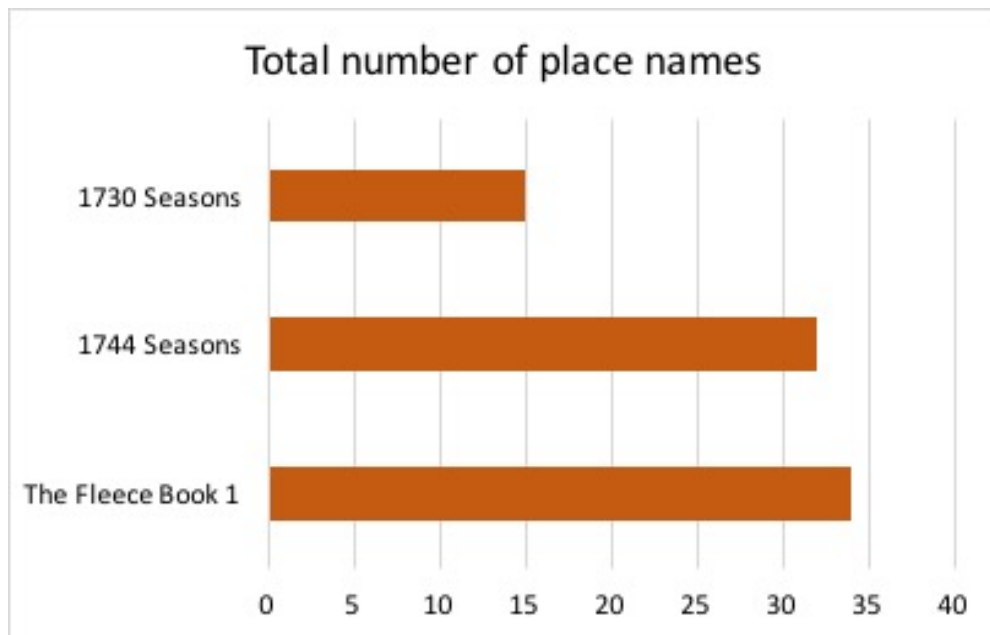


Figure 1

I have classified the place names within *The Seasons* as falling into six groups: Towns and Cities, Hills and Mountains, Stately Homes, Islands and Counties. When Thomson refers to larger geographical entities, he tends to personalise or generalise, as in his exclamation of ‘Happy Britannia!’, so this table displays no reference to an area larger than a county or

region, such as Dorset or Siluria. The adjacent table (fig.2) illustrates the degree in which each feature increased between 1730 and 1746.

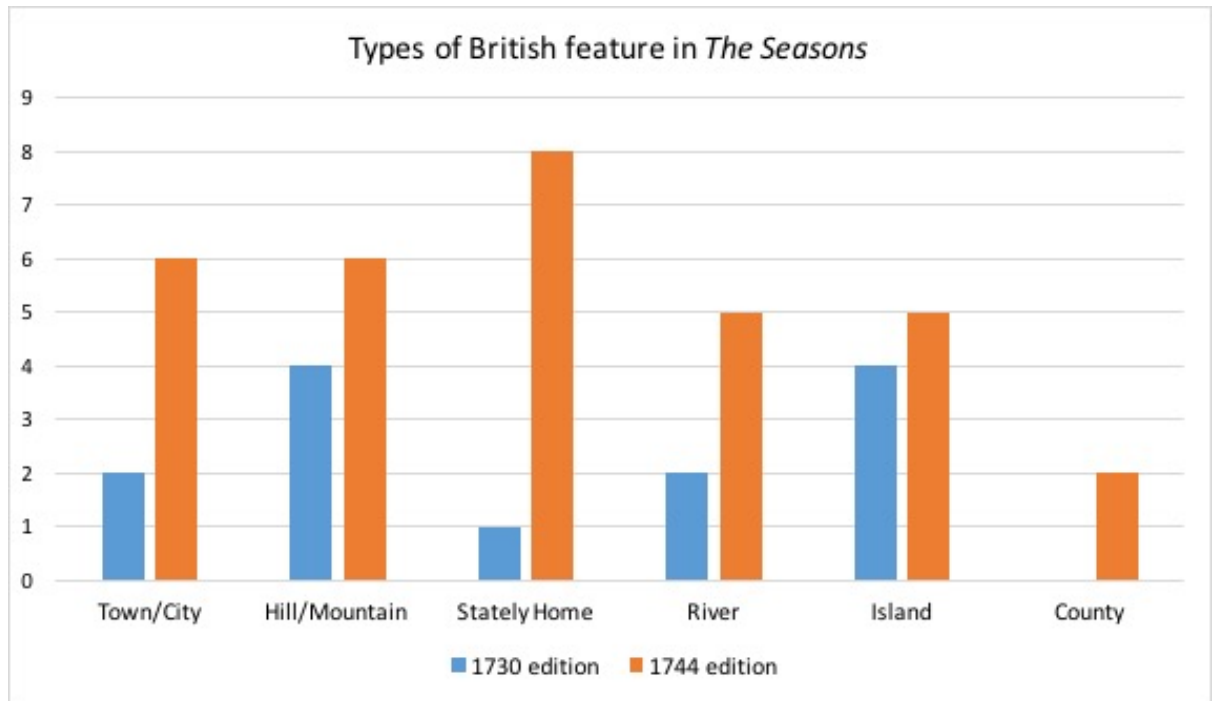


Figure 2

The largest increase is for the Stately Home, mentions of which expand eightfold. The number of towns or cities mentioned also triples. There is a corresponding increase in natural features, such as hills, rivers and islands, but not to the same degree. The redrafted 1746 poem seems to show more attention to man-made features than the 1730 *Seasons*, where natural features predominated. However, the increase in the number of towns/cities mentioned does not represent a thorough survey akin to Dyer's catalogues of county towns and industrial cities. Five of these six references relate to an area of twenty-five square miles west of London (which is counted twice). Caernarvon (or Caernarfon), the one other town

mentioned, is named to allude to the mountains surrounding it. We will survey and analyse the locations of these features in the two maps that follow.²⁶

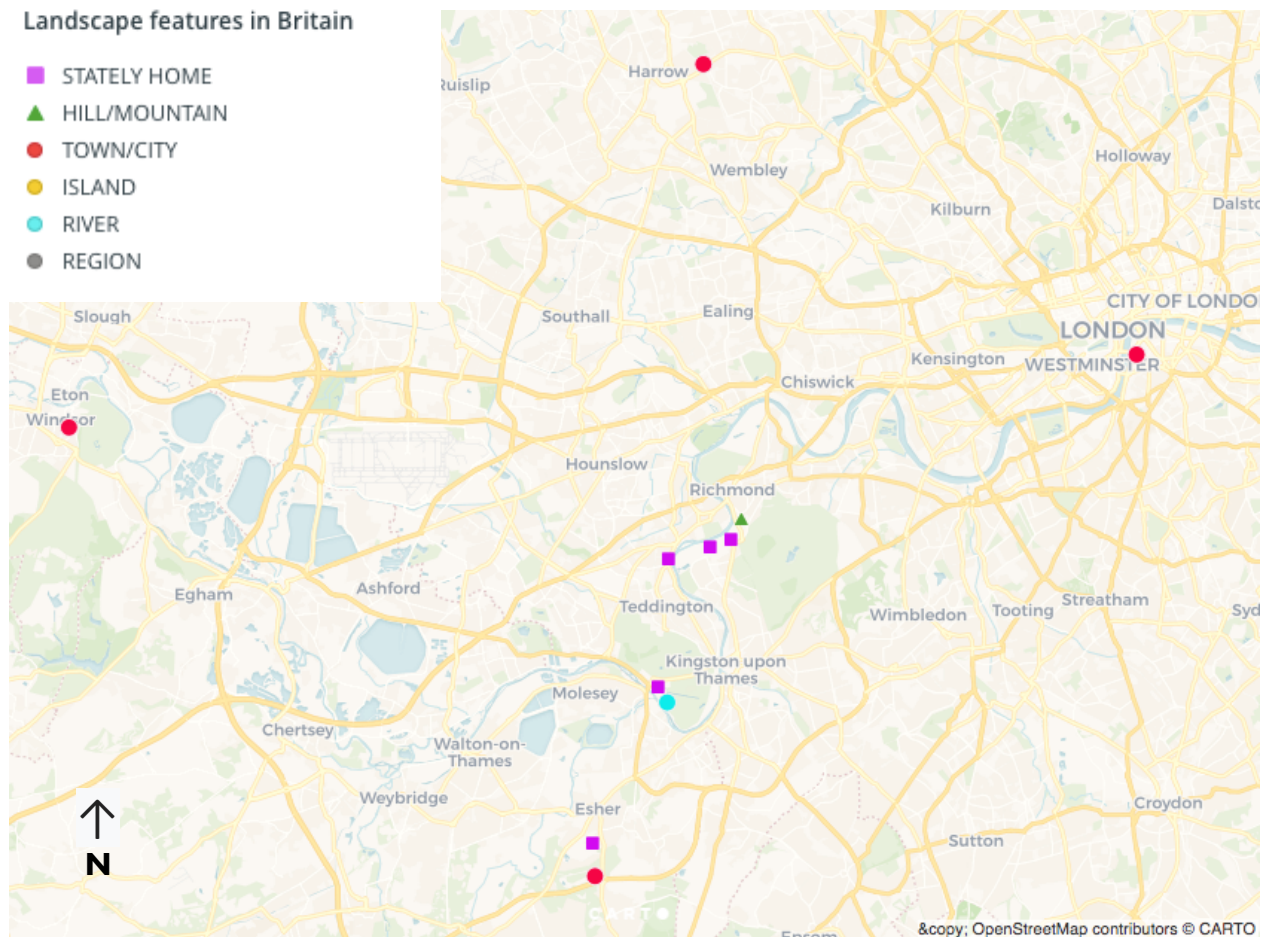


Figure 3

In this view of the country to the west of London, we see the features singled out in Thomson's extended prospect passage in *Summer*. Richmond Hill, the elevation from which

²⁶ All the maps below were made using the free online Carto Builder tool, and an interactive version can be consulted online by following this link: <http://tinyurl.com/y94d396r> (created 7th November 2017).

Thomson commences his survey, forms the centre of a diamond-shaped area which is defined by four urban locations which correspond roughly to the four cardinal points of the compass. To the east is the city of London (Augusta, in Thomson's poetic language), Harrow is to the north, Windsor to the west, and Esher to the south. These four locations, prominently mentioned in the poem, establish one of the conventions of the prospect: that Thomson's view is clear and unimpeded in every direction.

Here let us sweep
The boundless landscape; now the raptured eye
Exulting swift, to huge Augusta send
Now to the sister hills that skirt her plain,
To lofty Harrow now, and now to where
Majestic Windsor lifts his princely brow.
(*Summer*, 408-13)

While Thomson hails the visual freedom the prospect allows him, he never relinquishes control of the visual field, directing it first this way and then that before turning to where the Valley of the Thames extends to the south. Here he lets 'the feasted eye unwearied stray' past the estates of many of the poet's friends and patrons, including prominent Whig politicians and fellow poets such as Alexander Pope. This is a passage of literary and political networking which has something of the modern sense of acquiring and maintaining desirable contacts. The presence of Pope's Twickenham villa among these exclusive riverside residences is a reminder that a great poet can ascend the social ladder through literary and commercial success. Even where a more typical patronage relationship exists, Thomson does not allow the muse to prostrate herself before the aristocracy. In the lines 'The worthy Queensberry yet laments his Gay / And polished Cornbury woos the willing muse' (*Summer*, 1423-4), poets and patrons are bound through homosocial bonds rather than economic relationships. Charles Douglas, third Duke of Queensberry, is described as in mourning for the poet John Gay, whom he sheltered for the last years of his life. A symbiotic relationship between the poet and the patron is laid out, as Henry, Viscount Cornbury, the friend of Pope,

Swift and Thomson, is described as wooing them like a hopeful lover, even if the willingness of the muse implies no great reluctance.

There is a subtle but important difference between the country house poem, which celebrates a particular family's country house and grounds, usually from a subordinate position, and the prospect poem's survey from above. In this passage, the 'unbounded landscape' can be read as a pun on Thomson's own enfranchisement. For the narrator of the poem, looking upon the Edenic landscape of the country estate—the 'happy rural seat of various view', to use a conception Thomson borrowed from Milton—there is no 'access denied' as there was for Satan, who broke into Eden and whose fallen perspective necessarily taints the reader's first encounter with the Earthly Paradise. Thomson is able to move freely amongst this exclusive society, a knowledge which adds confidence to his survey.

Thomson's prospect in this section, added during the extensive revisions for the 1744 edition, is representative of his social and literary success in elevating himself to the top tier of English poetry. His growing ease in the landscape of aristocratic patronage had reaped handsome rewards, such as his engagement as grand-tour traveling companion to the son of Walpole's Solicitor-General, as well as a handsomely-salaried sinecure post at the Court of Chancery.²⁷ This optimistic view of the poet's present circumstances is applied across a more general vision of the nation at the conclusion of the passage.

Heavens! what a goodly prospect spreads around
Of hills, and dales, and woods, and lawns, and spires,
And glittering towns and gilded streams, till all
The stretching landskip into smoke decays!
Happy Britannia!

(*Summer*, 1439-42)

This unified spatial vision of a shining, prosperous land performs different services in different editions of *The Seasons*. In all the editions prior to 1744, this more generalised

²⁷ See Sambrook, *James Thomson*, pp.214-47.

‘goodly prospect’ of a flourishing landscape closed a section devoted to shaded retirement and natural observation. After the 1744 revisions, this retirement into the shade was the prelude to an imaginative survey of the equatorial torrid zone, and the above quotation was transposed to conclude Thomson’s prospect from Richmond Hill. Transposed into this new context, the lines take on a new meaning. In the early editions, this plenteous vision had been associated solely with the poet’s private reflections. When Thomson transferred them to the close of his prospect vision, they project the values of his literary and political network across the wider, generalised landscape of Britain.

Thus far, the prospect from Richmond Hill bears out the link between the surveying poet and the landowning aristocrat. Ralph Crane was the first to argue of Thomson that ‘By mounting a high place the speaker sees comprehensively, and since such height is on the aristocratic estate, the view is related to the true aristocratic ideal of embracing all of Britain’.²⁸ John Barrell, taking Crane’s argument a step further, elaborated on Thomson’s reliance on the supposedly dispassionate vision of the retired aristocratic observer in order to form a harmonising prospect of the country as a whole.²⁹ As we have already seen, however, an understanding of Thomson’s revisions and expansions changes our understanding of this narrative by showing that the country house theme is far less pronounced in earlier versions of *The Seasons*, when Thomson had yet to make his literary mark.³⁰ This is also true when,

²⁸ Crane, *Unfolding of the Seasons*, p.100.

²⁹ Barrell, *Equal Wide Survey*, pp.56-79.

³⁰ Glynis Ridley’s reflections on how the multiple revisions of *The Seasons* display Thomson’s political and artistic development are worth reading in this context: see ‘*The Seasons* and the Politics of Opposition’ in *Tercentenary Essays*, p.94.

through the aid of digital mapping software, we survey the country as a whole.

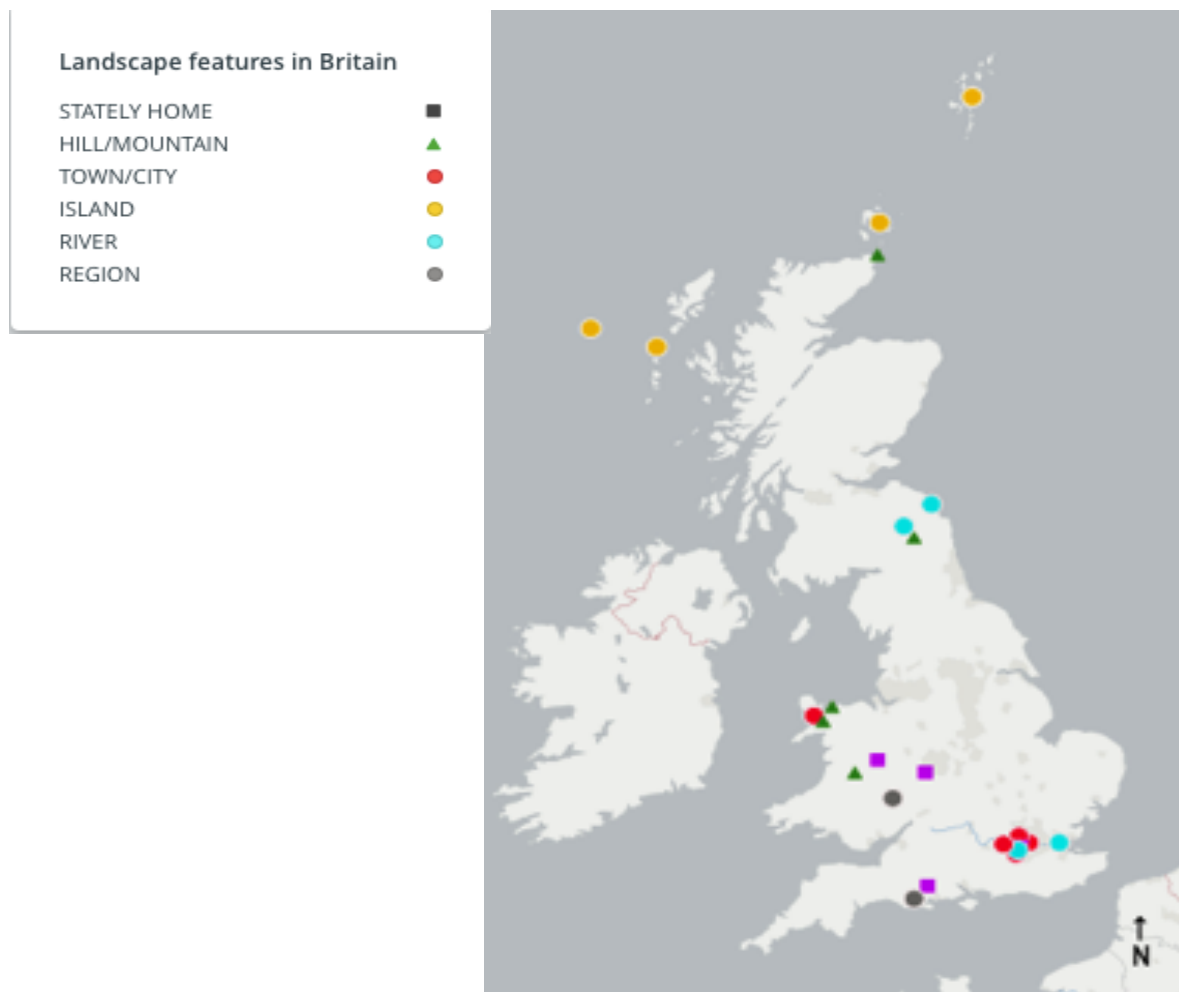


Figure 4

In this nation-wide view, we can see that Thomson's interest in country houses extends beyond the confines of London to three aristocratic seats in the midlands and the south of England: Eastbury Park, Stowe and Hagley Hall. These are often the site of generalised prospects of peace and fertility, constant to the values Thomson expresses in the prospect from Richmond Hill. However, we can contrast these with the way that other, more peripheral features are viewed, such as the cluster of references that refer largely to the mountains and islands on the Celtic periphery, appearing on the coast of North Wales and Northern Scotland. One such cluster of Celtic references occurs in Thomson's description of a thunderstorm in *Summer*.

Amid Caernarvon's mountains rages loud
 The repercussive roar: with mighty crush
 Into the flashing deep, from the rude rocks
 Of Penmaen-Mawr heaped hideous to the sky,
 Tumble the smitten cliffs; and Snowdon's peak,
 Dissolving, instant yields his wintry load.
 Far seen, the heights of heathy Cheviot blaze,
 And Thule bellows through her utmost isles.

(*Summer*, 1161-8)

Instead of a survey, we have an excursion, moving across a wide swathe of Britain with an emphasis on wilderness, differentiating the mountains and the Orkney and Shetland islands from the alternation of garden, farmland and town that is typical of Thomson's generalised landscapes. Even when the Welsh town of Caernarvon is mentioned, it is not as a hub of industry like London, but as a town largely defined by its surrounding mountains. As in Philips's references to Penmenmawr and Plinlimmon, this early Celtic sublime forms a variation of the same kind of exoticism that colours the passages in *Summer*, *Autumn* and *Winter* where the muse flies abroad.³¹ The first section gives the reader a sense of a single viewpoint, even though the exact location of the poet in Snowdonia is unclear. The next two shatter this idea of a single defined prospect when the poet's thought is able to dash, in two bounds, to the very northernmost point of Britain. The swift transition allies the poet's writing with the speed and power of the storm, but since it only sweeps across areas of relative wilderness rather than the stately homes and productive landscapes we are more familiar with, the sense of destruction is attenuated. The new Eden sketched in the prospect view is not threatened by the approaching storm, or the pathetic fallacy of any disturbance to the blessed state of rural retirement that such a storm might foreshadow. What we have is a new sense of dynamism, as the poet makes clear that his eye is not bound to a single place, as

³¹ For Thomson's sublimity and its relationship to Milton through the criticism of John Dennis, see Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth*, pp. 19–22.

in traditional prospect poetry such as ‘Cooper’s Hill’, but can dash across an extensive landscape purely by the power of association.

A similar dynamic is at work during the praise of Scotland in *Autumn*, where Thomson celebrates

her fertile vales,
With many a cool translucent brimming flood
Washed lovely, from the Tweed (pure parent-stream,
Whose pastoral banks first heard my Doric reed,
With, sylvan Jed, thy tributary brook)
To where the north-inflated tempest foams
O’er Orca or Betubium’s highest peak—
Nurse of a people, in misfortune’s school
Trained up to hardy deeds (Winter, 886-95)

There is an interesting alternation in this passage between ideas of pastoral idyll and rugged sublimity. Once again, there is a sudden geographical leap. The Tweed and the Jed flow on the southern borders of Scotland, close to the Cheviot Hills; Orca and Betubium refer to the Orkney Islands and the northernmost point of mainland Scotland respectively. As in the storm passage, Thomson passes from the Scottish borders to its most northern extent without mentioning the country’s two most populous cities or naming any intervening terrain. This means that Thomson’s Scotland is chiefly defined within the poem by its borders and its outlying islands, and indeed Thomson’s imaginative interest in islands is constant throughout his poetic career, from the ‘fractured Caledonian isles’ where the Spanish Armada is wrecked in *Britannia*, to the ‘shepherd of the Hebrid Isles’ who appears in *The Castle of Indolence*.³² Frequently described with a storm howling around them, the exposed terrain of the islands serves as a foil to the prosperous agricultural and commercial country Thomson describes elsewhere.

³² James Thomson, *Britannia* in *Poetical Works*, 1.89; Thomson, *The Castle of Indolence*, I. XXX. 1.

In allowing Thomson to juxtapose the apparently settled, pastoral state of the Scottish border with the wild shores of the northern isles, they also let him overleap the troubled (and troubling) Highland areas. The addition of this passage to *The Seasons* occurred just before the Jacobite rising, but it is clear that Thomson, as a committed Whig, was wholly on the side of the Hanoverians.³³ His repeated use of the northern isles, whose inhabitants never become part of the poem, allows Thomson to maintain the unity of his poetic vision, claiming the virility of a primitive, northern Britain whilst avoiding the thorny question of Scotland's actual political allegiance.

Thomson's use of Latinate place names also gives his northern locations a certain exoticism. The northern islands have been made more challenging to plot by his reliance on Ptolomaic geography rather than a modern atlas for his description of the extreme north of Britain. Thulè, for example, is never satisfactorily identified either in the poem or the footnote. Described in Classical geography as the northernmost point of the world, the candidates for its modern counterpart include Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands. In figure 4 I have followed most of Thomson's editors in identifying it, by a process of elimination, with the Shetland Islands, since the Hebrides and the Orkneys are mentioned elsewhere in the poem, and the poet does not appear to leave the British Isles. The same problems of identifications arise when Thomson writes in one passage of 'where the north-inflated tempest foams / O'er Orca's or Betubium's highest peak' (*Autumn*, 893). Orcas and Berubium, as described by Ptolemy, are two of the three northernmost promontories of Scotland. William Camden in *Britannia* (1586), his pioneering chorographical survey, gave them the alternative names of Howburn and Urdehead, but there remains some uncertainty over their precise identity. I have chosen here to follow J. Logie Robertson's confident

³³ As Glynis Ridley says, 'Thomson's staunchly Whig credentials have never been in doubt': see '*The Seasons* and the Politics of Opposition', p.93.

identification of Orcas with the Orkney Islands and Berubium with Duncansby Head rather than to follow recent editors into Camden's perplexing account of the Roman promontories.³⁴

We may reasonably ask whether Thomson intended his audience to catch this obscure reference, especially since he provided no footnote to clarify the issue. This Roman geography is used to give an impression of rugged and ancient northern extremity rather than to impress on the mind a physical area. It is also noticeable that Thomson mentions the river he was born beside rather than the town of his birth, and uses the pastoral image of the Doric reed to further distance his youth from the urban success he would later achieve. If the lists of stately homes seen from Richmond Hill are indexes of Thomson's social rise, the dynamic description of British wilderness areas displays the poet's ability to transcend the eighteenth-century posture of the fixed observer, and lay claim to a more visionary survey.

Thomson's most detailed views of the British landscape are found in *Summer* and *Autumn*, books which combine a country-house survey of the fruitful landscape with a wider impression of the wilderness at the margins of Britain. So far, my analysis has focussed on passages drawn from those books of the poem, but if we view the data as number of place names mentioned per season, the pie chart produced (fig. 5) has one noticeable and interesting omission.

³⁴ A.D. McKillop describes Robertson's note as not quite correct, and quotes Camden as identifying Orcas with Howburn and Berubium with Urdehead. After some research both with modern maps and gazetteers and with the maps printed with the *Britannia*, I have been unable to locate these places under either name. Hence I have returned to Robertson's original identification. See James Thomson, *Poetical Works*, ed. by J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.164; Alan Dugald McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's 'Seasons'* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1942), p.134-5.

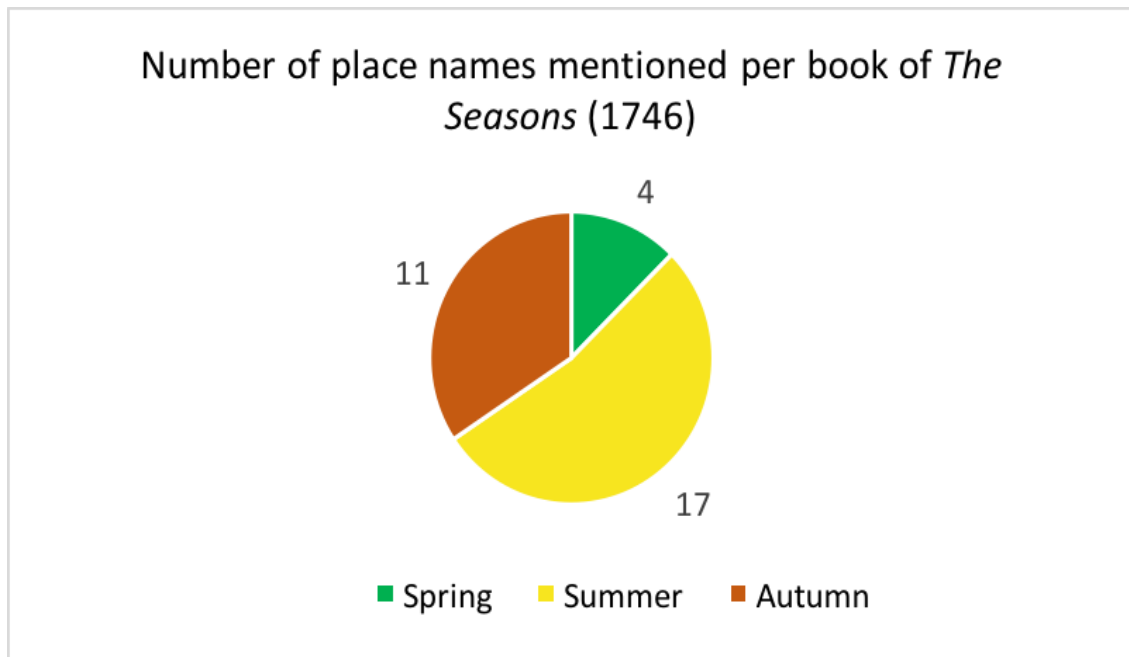


Figure 5

Summer accounts for over half of the total, due largely to the extensive prospect from Richmond Hill. *Autumn*, with its focus on the fertile landscape, also accounts for a respectable share of the total. *Spring*, which primarily takes up the theme of love, gives relatively little space to geography. *Winter* is the only season where Thomson mentions no identifiable places in Great Britain at all.³⁵ At the level of patronage relationships, we may guess that the omission of a country house in this book of the poem is due to the fact that unlike the other seasons of germination, fruition, and gathering, Winter offers very few opportunities to praise the bounty of an aristocratic patron and the beauty and fertility of his

³⁵ This lack of place-names should be weighed against critical assertions that ‘Winter’ is the portion of *The Seasons* where Thomson’s Scottish upbringing comes through most clearly in his descriptions of the landscape. See James Sambrook, *James Thomson (1700-1748): A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) for the clearest information on this part of his biography. Mary-Jane Scott, *James Thomson, Anglo-Scot* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988) contextualizes *Winter* in relation to the Scottish tradition of wintry landscape poetry.

or her grounds. Thomson frequently repaid acts of literary patronage in this manner in his revised and expanded versions of the other three seasons, but the convention is notably absent here.

The lack of geographical references serves a poetical purpose, however, since Winter is a season whose barrenness and inclemency makes familiar features and waymarks unrecognisable. While the other seasons offer prospects on scenes of fertility and industry, when the winter snow falls, 'Earth's universal face, deep-hid and chill / Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide / The works of man' (*Winter*, 238-40). As Cohen has noted, this dazzling landscape mirrors the scintillating landscape seen in 'Summer', characterised by 'glittering towns and gilded streams' (*Summer*, 1440).³⁶ Both prospects have their beauty, but the beauty of Winter is a dangerous one. The shining snow erases distinctions, overlaying the fertile landscape and restoring it to wilderness, and this transition between the familiar and the perilous is dramatically evoked in one of Thomson's set-pieces, the story of a shepherd who has become lost in a snowstorm.

In his own loose-revolving field the swain
Disastered stands; sees other hills ascend
Of unknown joyless brow, and other scenes
Of horrid prospect, shag the trackless plain;
Nor finds the river nor the forest, hid
Beneath the formless wild; but wanders on
From hill to dale, still more and more astray (*Winter*, 278-284)

What was once a known familiar landscape has now become as changeable and as treacherous as Milton's Chaos. As conditions deteriorate, it becomes impossible to distinguish the solid from the fluid, and the inability to trust to appearances troubles the swain with visions of the hazards into which he might stumble.

Then throng the busy shapes into his mind
Of covered pits, unfathomably deep,

³⁶ See Cohen, *Unfolding of The Seasons*, p. 264.

A dire descent! beyond the power of frost;
Of faithless bogs; of precipices huge,
Smoothed up with snow; and (what is land unknown,
What water) of the still unfrozen spring,
In the loose marsh or solitary lake,
Where the fresh fountain from the bottom boils. (Winter, 297-304)

Like Satan, the swain faces the possibility of meeting with ‘A vast vacuity: all unawares’ (*PL* II. 932), or of being ‘Quenched in a boggy Syrtis, neither sea, / Nor good dry land’ (*PL* II. 939-40). Yet whereas Chaos in *Paradise Lost* served as an obstacle for Satan to surmount before he reached the stellar universe, exhibiting his heroic puissance in doing so, the ‘disastered swain’ is foredoomed from his first appearance to perish of exposure in the deeply inhospitable winter environment. As Tim Fulford writes of this passage

it seems as if syntax and sense are conjoining to force an experience of reading in which landscape becomes profoundly disturbing, since for reader as for shepherd both nature and the discourse in which it is framed lack conventional order [...] Thomson’s language is straining all its resources to register an apprehension of chaos.³⁷

The jarring Miltonic syntax of the passage, disturbing the expected grammatical sequence of reading, is paralleled by Thomson’s proleptic references to the shepherd’s death even as we read of his struggles for survival. Finally, it is psychological rather than physical obstacles that seal his undoing. The thought of the depths and bogs that had marked the progress of Satan’s journey paralyse the swain and prevent him from trekking further through the snow. Rather than turning to heroic motion, he retreats into stasis, thinking of the wife and children he will see no more, until the narrator regretfully announces his death.

Though Thomson does draw on Milton’s Chaos to create the wintry landscape here seen, the entirely different ways in which Satan and the swain react to this impediment illustrates the differences between the heroic actor and the sentimental figure. Whereas Satan

³⁷ Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty, Authority*, p. 24.

is able to surmount Chaos, and Death and Sin later bridge the gulf between Hell and the stellar universe, the shepherd in Thomson's poem faces the nightmare of the places he knows and orients himself by being superseded by treacherous, inhospitable abstract space, wherein all familiar waymarks are obliterated. The thunderstorm in *Summer* has a ferocious energy, but it is ultimately contained within the geographical and historical bounds of the British Isles. The pathless, unmappable landscape of *Winter* is the true antithesis of the Edenic country houses in their peaceful georgic surroundings, and of the idyllic vision from Richmond Hill. Only at a global level can it be harmonised with the other landscapes in the poem.

The Seasons Abroad

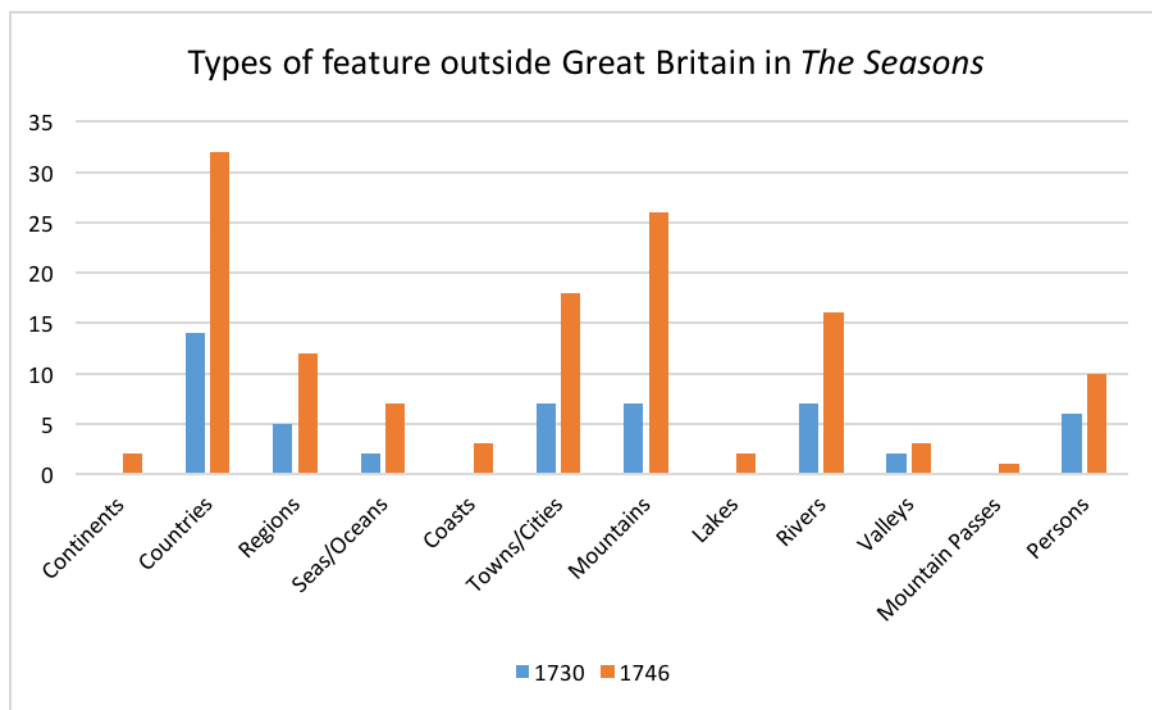


Figure 6

As with the geographical features within the British Isles, we can get a clear idea of the expansion of *The Seasons* between 1730 and 1746 through the use of a bar chart. The data here indicates an even greater expansion than we saw within Britain. Mentions of the most

frequently appearing features—Countries, Towns/Cities, Mountains, Rivers, Regions and Seas/Oceans—more than double between the first complete edition and the last. In addition, there are a small range of features, such as Continents, Coasts, Lakes and Mountain Passes, that appear only in the later editions, indicating that Thomson’s poetry was describing a more detailed and varied geography in the later revisions of his poem. Compared to the number of features within the British Isles, features abroad are both more common and more varied in their representation.

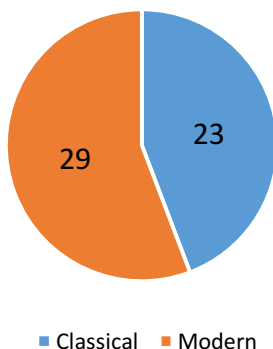
One category in the graph does not relate exactly to a geographical feature. This is the category of ‘Persons’ which I have included as a way to measure the occasions where people within the poem are referred to by the place to which they belong. Some of these function as poetic circumlocutions: ‘the Mantuan swain’ (*Spring*, 456) refers to the Roman poet Virgil, in his function as the pastoral writer of the *Eclogues* rather than the epic poet of the *Aeneid*; ‘the Samnian sage’ (*Spring*, 373) refers to the Greek philosopher Pythagoras. Others, such as the ‘maids of Afric’ and ‘Russia’s buxom daughters’ (*Winter*, 778) serve as indicators of nationality that are functionally not entirely distinct from ‘Russian’ or ‘African’. As these are not strictly geographical references, I have chosen to list them separately.

A considerable portion of Thomson’s features describe a classical geography, where a spatial reference is also a temporal one: Thomson’s references to Rome or Greece do not generally refer to the Rome or Greece of the eighteenth century, but instead function as metonyms for the Roman Empire and classical Greek civilisation. Some features are used as both classical and contemporary references, and distinguishing between them requires a contextual understanding of the passage. For example, the Grecian Mount Haemus is mentioned twice in *Autumn*, in a different context each time. The first time it appears as part of a contemporary catalogue of mountains across four continents, where it is clearly the modern mountain which is described; the second time it is part of a simile where the happy

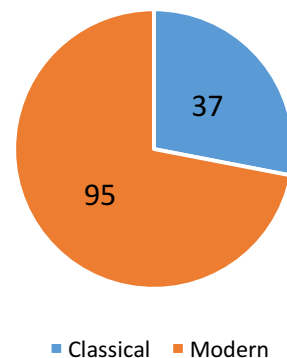
man dwells ‘beneath the living shade, / Such as o’er frigid Tempe want to wave, / Or Haemus cool’ (1316-8), and where it forms a reference to a classical pastoral past set against the bustle of the modern world. Single features can thus appear as either classical or modern, but it is usually simple to distinguish between them.

As we can see from figures 7 and 8, the balance of classical to modern geography in the 1730 edition of *The Seasons* was slightly in favour of modern geography, with the twenty-three classical references making up 42% of the total. By the time of the 1746 edition, the number of references to classical geography has increased slightly, to thirty-seven. The proportion of classical references as part of the total number of references within the poem, however, has shrunk dramatically to 28%.

Classical and Modern Places in *The Seasons* (1730)



Classical and Modern Places in *The Seasons* (1746)



Figures 7 and 8

Perhaps one reason why classical geography failed to keep pace with modern day geography in the 1746 *Seasons* was that Thomson had already expressed many of his convictions about ancient Greece and Rome in his progress poem *Liberty* (1736) which tried to trace a line of political and artistic development from ancient Greece to present-day

Britain.³⁸ Moreover, that poem had been a flop, with each instalment of the sequentially-released poem printed in smaller numbers than the one before. While Thomson expressed his opinion that *Liberty* was the greatest of his works, critical opinion then and now has disagreed, and Thomson uncharacteristically abandoned his revised edition midway through the drafting process.³⁹ In the revised *Seasons* Thomson's enthusiasm turned to modern geography, and the three-fold increase in references to modern features is principally due to three passages added to the poem in 1744. These are the tour of the torrid zone added to *Summer* (629-1102), the frigid zone added to *Winter* (760-987) and the hydrological passage in *Autumn* (773-835). Since these are the most concentrated passages of geographical description in the poem, drawing upon *Paradise Lost* and influencing *The Fleece*, my discussion of this part of *The Seasons* will focus on these three extracts.

Thomson's tour of the torrid zone is the story of the poet's imaginative transportation by 'bold fancy' (*Summer*, 631) from a bower in an English garden across an equatorial panorama. The first hundred lines (from 635 to 747) describe a prospect view of a generalised tropical landscape with both Indian and African characteristics, as drawn from Thomson's reading in eighteenth-century travel literature. Emphasis is laid on the 'dreadful beauty' and 'barbarous wealth' of the area, with the 'Rocks rich in gems and mountains big

³⁸ See Alan Dugald McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's 'Liberty'* (Houston: Rice Institute, 1951).

³⁹ As usual, Samuel Johnson puts it in the pithiest manner: '*Liberty* called in vain upon her votaries to read her praises, and reward her encomiast: her praises were condemned to harbour spiders, and to gather dust: none of Thomson's performances were so little regarded. The judgment of the public was not erroneous; the recurrence of the same images must tire in time; an enumeration of examples to prove a position which nobody denied, as it was from the beginning superfluous, must quickly grow disgusting.' *Lives of the Poets*, IV, p.99. The dust and spiders are still largely undisturbed, though *Liberty* does preserve some historical interest for academics. Robin Dix has recently pointed out that 'If it has proved impossible to present *Liberty* as a successful poem, it has at least become possible to see it as an interesting one' in an interesting overview of Thomson's later poetic strategies: see 'James Thomson and the Progress of the Progress Poem: From *Liberty* to The Castle of Indolence', in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. by Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 117. For Thomson's partial revision of *Liberty*, see James Thomson, *Liberty: The Castle of Indolence, and Other Poems*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 35.

with mines' (*Summer*, 643-6), aspects which can be contrasted with the safe, homely beauties and industry-derived wealth of the home country. The visual focus of this landscape description is varied by a passage of fruit-eating that evokes not only the sensation of taste but also of touch, as the cool breeze and shade of the fruit-trees quenches the heat of the narrator's body as well as his thirst. The sensuousness of these passages have an erotic frisson perhaps best shown when the poet demands of the pineapple, with the impatience of a lover, 'Quick let me strip thee of thy tufty coat / Spread thy ambrosial stores, and feast with Jove!' (*Summer*, 688-9).⁴⁰

Recalled from this episode of libidinous fruit-eating, Thomson uses an invocation to the muse as a means of moving to a higher prospect from Mount Amara, a location with epic associations; Milton noted that it was 'by some supposed / True Paradise under the Ethiop line' (*PL IV*. 281-2).⁴¹ The exhortation to a more heroic display of exploratory prowess is immediately undercut by qualms about the imperial conquest and exploitation such explorers may bring in their train.

But come, my Muse, the desert-barrier burst,
A wild expanse of lifeless sand and sky;
And, swifter than the toiling caravan,
Shoot o'er the vale of Sennar; ardent climb
The Nubian mountains, and the secret bounds
Of jealous Abyssinia boldly pierce.
Thou art no ruffian, who beneath the mask
Of social commerce com'st to rob their wealth
No holy fury thou, blaspheming Heaven
With consecrated steel to stab their peace
And through the land, yet red from civil wounds,
To spread the purple tyranny of Rome.
Thou, like the harmless bee, mayst freely range
From mead to mead bright with exalted flowers.

⁴⁰ For more on the erotic symbolism of pineapples within eighteenth-century verse, see Liz Bellamy, 'The Uses of Fruit: Literary Symbolism and Technological Change in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Literature and History*, 24.2 (2015), 1-17 (p. 7).

⁴¹ There is also some evidence that Thomson was thinking of Milton even before he turned towards Abyssinia. Two lines before the invocation of the muse, Thomson borrows a line directly from the minor Miltonic poem 'On the circumcision'. See *Summer*, 745 and n. For a detailed account of the sources of this passage, see McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's 'Seasons'*, pp. 151-55.

(*Summer*, 747-60)

In the passage, Thomson expressly disavows any association with the commercial networks which *The Fleece* would celebrate, making it clear that his poetry offers an aesthetic landscape rather than Dyer's commercial geography. There is also an interesting change in tone between the muse that overleaps all obstacles of desert and border—like Satan who 'At one slight bound high over leaped all bound' (*PL* IV. 181) in his approach to Eden—and the muse who approaches the mountain top, which Thomson compares to a wandering bee: a harmless species native both to Britain and Abyssinia, which cannot be accused of interloping. In this simile, the muse, wandering up the mountain 'From jasmine grove to grove' (*Summer*, 761) is seeking for beauty rather than the panoptic visual power available from the mountain's summit. Thomson seems sensible of the peril of approaching a landscape sometimes identified with Eden like a Satanic interloper, and this accords with critical suspicion that Thomson protests too much when he declares his muse innocent of imperial commerce or conquest. As Griffin asks, 'Why [...] does Thomson bother to *deny* what few readers would have suspected, that the poet is like a merchant, in effect an agent of British imperial expansion, unless the poet suspects it himself?'⁴² For Griffin, the attempt to distance himself from an exploitative, colonial viewpoint demonstrates Thomson's fear that he is, in fact, replicating it.

Another interesting echo of Milton occurs in the description of the rivers Orellana and Plata (the Amazon and the river Plate), where

O'er peopled plains they fair-diffusive flow
And many a nation feed, and circle safe
In their soft bosom many a happy isle
The seat of blameless Pan, yet undisturbed
By Christian crimes and Europe's cruel sons.

(*Summer*, 851-5)

⁴² Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, p.89.

These sheltering, nourishing rivers enfold a sheltered people whose Eden is yet untouched by European visitors. Such a 'happy isle' echoes the 'happy isles, / Like those Hesperian gardens famed of old' (*PL* III. 566-7), as Milton describes the planets in deep space which Satan passes by on his journey to Earth. This strengthens the implication that such refuges are like a second Eden. Thomson would also have been aware of Milton's comparison of Adam and Eve to 'the American so girt / With feathered cincture, naked else and wild' (*PL* IX. 1115-7) with its implication that the arrival of the Europeans in the New World marks the inhabitants' fall from grace.⁴³ This passage describes an Eden in the wilderness, and if the criticism of 'Christian crimes and Europe's cruel sons' seems from the context to be mostly directed against the power of Spain and Portugal in South America, it is sufficiently general to implicate the British reader.

In the next passage Thomson contrasts the apparently Edenic world of his earlier descriptions with the disadvantages of the torrid zone, as in a series of rhetorical questions he asks 'what avails' the botanic and mineral riches of Africa and America without the moral superiority which Europeans, apparently, possess. The climate is to blame, and the inhabitants of the torrid zone do not live in Edenic bliss after all, but in a zone where

The parent sun himself
Seems o'er this world of slaves to tyrannize,
And with oppressive ray the roseate bloom
Of beauty blasting, gives the gloomy hue
And feature gross

(*Summer*, 884-888)

The sun itself has marked out the inhabitants of the torrid zone for slavery, denying them the milder temper, reasoning and laws which are the birthright of those who dwell in a damp,

⁴³ For more on Milton's treatment of Native Americans, see Sharon Achinstein, 'Imperial Dialect: Milton and Conquered Peoples', in *Milton and the Imperial Vision*, ed. by Balachandra Rajan (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1999).

temperate climate like Britain. The sensuousness that the narrator indulged in with his fruit-eating orgy is the downfall of the native populace who live without self-restraint, ‘in selfish fierce desire / And the wild fury of voluptuous sense’ (*Summer*, 894-5). As John Sitter summarises: ‘Sensibility grows in temperate zones. English culture is the providential compensation for English weather.’⁴⁴ The milder weather enforces, in turn, a milder temperament and government, whereas the apparently Edenic landscapes of the torrid zone only provoke vice in fallen humanity, whose revelry have turned them into moral monsters akin to the half-bestial followers of Comus. When a catalogue of animals hostile to man succeeds, pride of place is given to the serpent, reminding us once more that this apparent Eden is already corrupted. Unlike Thomson’s prospects of Britain, the view of the tropics produces not one harmonious vision, but two contrasting perspectives on the beauties and the horrors of the climate, while the interlinking passage notes that since the natives lack the proper European sensibility, the beauties are less appreciated and the terrors more evident.

Thomson’s ideas in this passage accord with what A.D. McKillop describes as ‘soft primitivism’, where humans in a fruitful natural environment are able to live without toil, and can be compared with the people of a pastoral or Edenic golden age. The opposite trend is ‘hard primitivism’ where privation and scarcity results in a simpler, more authentic life.⁴⁵ We see hard primitivism on display in Thomson’s description of the inhabitants of Lapland in *Winter*, whose onerous living conditions guarantee them liberty and happiness through private virtue. These people are so well adapted to their climate that they ‘love their mountains and enjoy their storms’ (*Winter*, 846). In fact, as Thomson goes on to elaborate,

⁴⁴ John E Sitter, *Literary Loneliness in Mid-Eighteenth Century England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 185.

⁴⁵ McKillop, *The Background of Thomson’s ‘Seasons’*, Chapter 3 *passim*.

their happiness is to be envied, as their society is so well organised as to be morally superior to the more sophisticated British society.

Thrice happy race! by poverty secured
From legal plunder and rapacious power
In whom fell interest never yet has sown
The seeds of vice, whose spotless swains ne'er knew
Injurious deed, nor, blasted by the breath
Of faithless love, their blooming daughter's woe.
(*Winter*, 881-6)

Not only are the Lapps free of both the corruptions consequent upon a system of legal and political power, such as Thomson would continually identify throughout his poetic career with the administration of Sir Robert Walpole, but their morals are also in good standing. They too possess the virtues of the pastoral idyll, as Thomson indicates by using the pastoral term 'spotless swains' to describe the inhabitants of a land where even the hardiest sheep would never prosper.

Nor does their simplicity and isolation render them a mere footnote in history. We are reminded that their antecedents

once relumed the flame
Of lost mankind in polished slavery sunk;
Drove martial horde on horde, with dreadful sweep
Resistless rushing o'er the enfeebled south,
And gave the vanquished world another form.
(*Winter*, 838-42)

Thomson had written extensively and approvingly about the invasion of the decadent Roman Empire by the northern tribes in his progress poem, *Liberty*.⁴⁶ The re-emergence of it here sets a theme of transformation that we shall also see in the activities of Peter the Great. As I shall go on to argue, this whole section can be seen as a kind of submerged progress poem,

⁴⁶ See *Liberty*, III 510-38, IV 370-8.

the ideology of which underlies the verse more skilfully than in Thomson's overtly didactic *Liberty*.

Unlike in the torrid zone, where the prospect view was frequently deployed, Thomson's muse does not simply take a single station and observe, but follows an explorer's path, albeit one never made in the eighteenth century. Journeying on 'beyond Tornea's lake, / And Hecla flaming through a waste of snow, / And farthest Greenland, to the pole itself' (*Winter*, 887-9), the muse traverses the north pole and descends into Russia. This journey traverses a range of modes, from allegory, to sublime natural description, to historical episode, through to the concluding panegyric on Peter the Great, the modernising Tsar of Russia.

After crossing the north pole, the muse's first encounter in the new hemisphere is with the allegorical palace where 'Winter holds his unrejoicing court; / And through his airy hall the loud misrule / Of driving tempest is for ever heard' (*Winter*, 895-7). This allegorical passage is an unusual element in *The Seasons*—while Thomson would continually personify the seasons through direct address, and briefly sketch their persons in the opening lines of each book, we have not previously encountered Spring, Summer or Autumn in a palace, grove or dwelling which is their particular haunt. The clever construction of this episode within the passage as a whole justifies its inclusion, however. We have already seen, in the previous section, how the onset of winter in Britain is described in language that draws upon Milton's Chaos. The narrative placement of Thomson's description of Winter in his palace recalls the pavilion of Chaos that Satan encounters midway through his journey to Earth, and sets the reader up for the passage of sublime description that follows.

As the muse heads east towards the Tartar's coast, or northern Siberia, she encounters enormous icebergs, described in language that draws from the Miltonic sublime: 'Alps frown on Alps; or rushing hideous down, / As if old Chaos was again returned, / Wide rend the deep

and shake the solid pole' (*Winter*, 910-12). The figure of the shepherd frozen to death in the British wilderness earlier in *Winter* is mirrored by the historical episode where an Elizabethan expedition lead by Sir Hugh Willoughby froze to death—or in Thomson's version, 'he with his hapless crew, / Each full exerted at his several task, / Froze into statues—to the cordage glued / The sailor, and the pilot to the helm' (*Winter*, 932-5). The mirroring with earlier episodes continues with Thomson's description of the 'last of men', the Siberian natives who represent the rudest form of human nature, without the liberty and social affection Thomson attributes to the Lapps.

Yet even these people can be roused by the strength of an effective government, as Thomson demonstrates in his panegyric to Peter the Great. The Russian Tsar, an active ruler bent on turning Russia into a modern European state, is portrayed as the antithesis of the solitary, tyrannical Winter, treasuring up new storms with which to oppress the wintry world. Cohen, who first noticed the contrast between Winter and the Tsar describes it as 'one of [Thomson's] few successes in term of public praise.'⁴⁷ Thomson does not reinvent Peter the Great as an idealised version of what he should be, as he does with too many of the British aristocrats with whom he has patronage relationships, but praises him for his actual accomplishment of fashioning a nation along the lines of a European state from a 'Gothic darkness' (*Winter*, 954).

It would be reasonable to inquire why the muse pursues an exploratory flight at this point, instead of Thomson's signature means of viewing, the survey. It is possible to imagine the muse posed on the north pole, measuredly surveying all points south, rather than following the exploratory trajectory she here pursues. One of the reasons, I believe, is that the prospect view, as Barrell describes it, is 'the principal harmonizing strategy of the poem', and

⁴⁷ Cohen, *Unfolding of the Seasons*, p.307.

harmony is not the effect desired at this point.⁴⁸ We have already seen Thomsonian harmony tested in the account of the tropics, where alternate panoramas of the beauties and the horrors of the torrid zone were juxtaposed without a balance being struck. In the Arctic, what Thomson offers is not a harmonious view, but the essential stadial features of Whig history, rendering this passage a kind of submerged progress poem. Primitive, virtuous simplicity is shown in the Lapps; feudal tyranny in the allegorical figure of Winter as a cruel autocratic King and finally in the figure of Peter the Great we see the rise of the enlightened, patriotic monarch with the best interests of his people at heart. The muse's progress through the Arctic regions embodies this historiographical trajectory.

In the descriptions of the torrid and frigid zones, Thomson uses the two means of viewing he also adopted for his description of Britain. First is the prospect view, which in Britain is used to create a composed harmony between different elements in the landscape, but which creates two panoramas of beauties and horrors, the tension between which is never fully resolved. Secondly is the point-to-point excursion, suited to more rugged or sublime passages, as when a storm sweeps the narrator from Wales to the Hebrides, or when the muse makes her transpolar expedition. The hydrological passage in *Autumn* inaugurates a new way of viewing. Dismissed as a 'purple patch' by Raymond Dexter Havens, and mentioned by A.D. McKillop chiefly as a means to investigate Thomson's knowledge of eighteenth-century hydrological theory, its distinctive method and influence have not hitherto been recognised.⁴⁹ The catalogue of mountains does not attempt to duplicate Milton's inspired cosmographic vision but neither does it offer a prospect or an excursion. Instead, Thomson achieves a trans-

⁴⁸ Barrell, *Equal Wide Survey*, p.54.

⁴⁹ Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*, p.132; McKillop, *Background of The Seasons*, pp.85-8.

global vision, in which the powers of Enlightenment science lend the poet a truly visionary eye, which can pierce through solid matter to discern the secret workings of things.

The invocation to the passage is where Thomson both acknowledges his predecessor poet and differentiates his approach from Milton's.

Say then, where lurk the vast eternal springs
That, like creating Nature, lie concealed
From mortal eye, yet with their lavish stores
Refresh the globe and all its joyous tribes?
O thou pervading genius, given to man
To trace the secrets of the dark abyss! (*Autumn*, 773-8)

Indicating the movement to a higher style of poetry, this introduction preserves many recognisable features of the epic invocation, such as the appeal to a higher power to reveal to the poet what was previously hidden. Whereas Milton appealed to the Holy Spirit, however, Thomson appeals to one of the innate powers of man: the pervading genius of reason. In Thomson's age, external spiritual aid is not needed; man's innate, God-given reason can pierce through all barriers and instruct him in the workings of nature.

There follows a catalogue of mountains whose inner workings will be laid bare to explicate the water cycle. There is an early nod towards *Paradise Lost* when he describes 'Imaus stretched / Athwart the roving Tartar's sullen bounds' (*Autumn*, 783-4), a clear borrowing from Milton's simile of 'a Vulture on Imaus bred / Whose snowy ridge the roving Tartar bounds' (*PL* III. 431-2) which serves once again as an indicator of the rise to a higher poetic style as well as intimating Thomson's adoption of Milton's geographical scope. As the catalogue of mountains which covers Europe, Asia, Africa and South America, expands, taking in features from both the torrid and the frigid zones, it becomes evident that this is not a prospect or progress like those we have seen in *Summer* and *Winter*. Its generalising power is sufficient to hold every mountain in the world in a single view, covering a vast swathe of

the globe from Siberian mountain ranges through to the southernmost tip of the Andes, while it penetrates their solid masses to explicate the workings of the mountain springs.

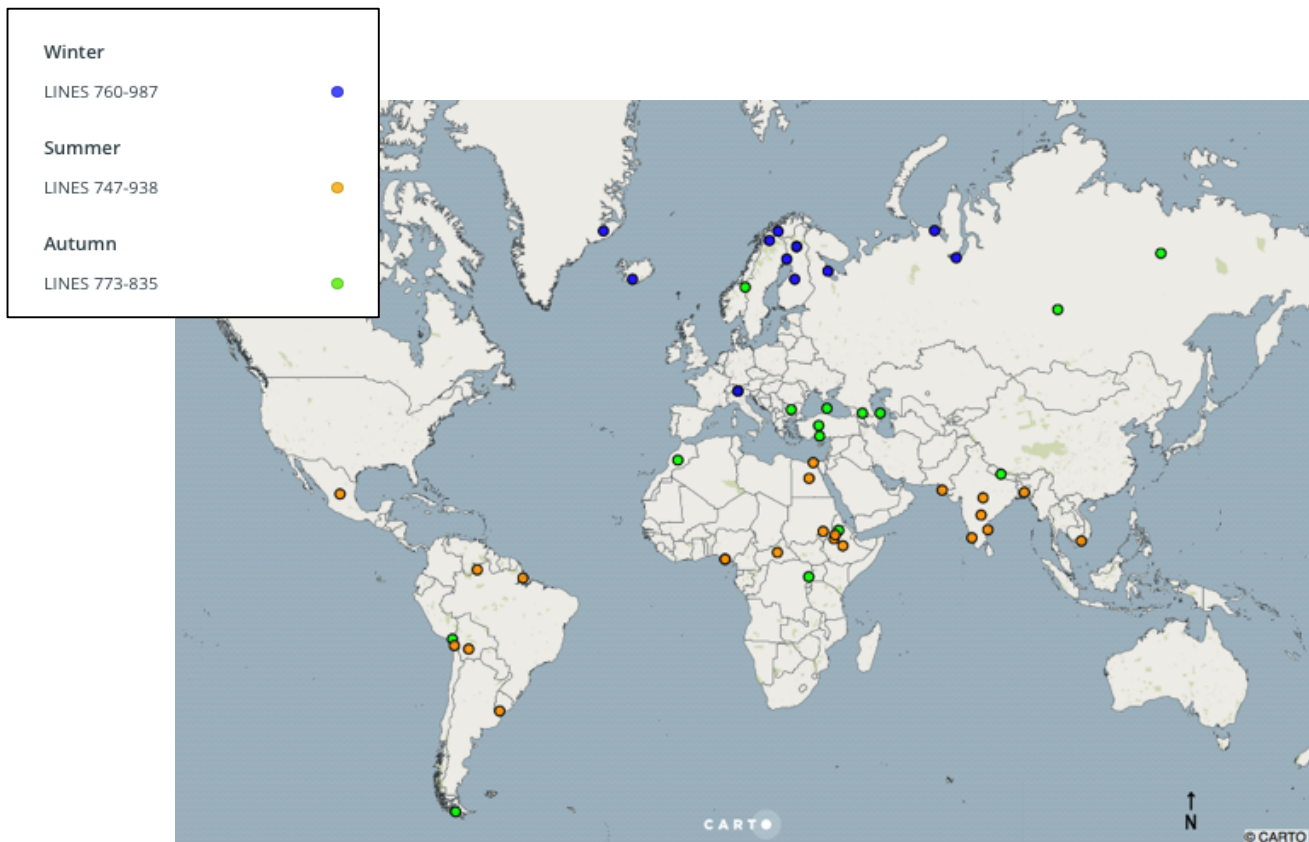


Figure 9

The range of mountains mentioned in *Autumn* shares ground with the terrain already analysed in the passages from *Winter* and *Summer*. Assimilating the territories of both these passages, it also goes beyond them. The visualising power of reason in this passage, however, is active rather than passive—it is appealed to constantly to ‘lay the mountains bare’ (*Autumn*, 779) to ‘Unveil / The miny caverns’ (799-800) and ‘their hideous deeps unfold’ (806). While the geographical references in *Summer* and *Winter* were invitations to pick out surface features on a map, such as figure 8 above, this passage invites the eye to penetrate deeper, visualising an abstract scientific understanding and infusing it with sensory appeal. Reading up on the sources of rivers does not merely impart to the poet an abstract knowledge of their principles, it reveals their whole operation to his eyes and ears.

Amazing scene! Behold! the glooms disclose!
I see the rivers in their infant beds!
Deep, deep I hear them labouring to get free!
(*Autumn*, 807-9)

The simple words ‘I see’ reoccur throughout the passage, re-establishing the power of vision whenever the detailed geological descriptions ‘Of mingled moulds, of more retentive earths, / The guttered rocks and mazy-running clefts’ (*Autumn*, 815-6) threaten to overwhelm it and reduce the poetry to a geological list. Vision, important throughout the poem, is especially so here, when the poet’s ability to view the whole hydrological cycle is central to his concluding claim that the waters ‘A social commerce hold, and firm support / The full-adjusted harmony of things’ (*Autumn*, 834-5). It may seem bathetic to describe Thomson as seeking to justify the hydrological cycle to man, but this passage is the most ambitious in the poem in terms of the scope and power it gives to Thomson’s poetic vision, and the ability of human intelligence to perceive the harmony that prevails amongst variety, both in Nature, and throughout *The Seasons*. Moving beyond the two signature viewing techniques of prospect and excursion, which we have seen previously, Thomson’s use of Milton in this passage indicates the rise to a higher style, but fuses this to a vision of the hydrological cycle drawn from the most advanced eighteenth-century theories of the time. A whole poem written in this tone would quickly grow turgid, but this foray into the grand style is original and successful, benefiting from the contrast with the other variety of subjects and perspectives folded into the flexible structure of *The Seasons*. In contrast to the terrifying dissolution of the landscape into abstract space in *Winter*, the hydrological passage gives the narrator a clear scientifically-aligned global view across multiple continents. Building on Thomson’s earlier successes in visual poetry, it is the closest the poem comes to Milton’s inspired cosmographic vision of the Earth as part of the wider universe.

Conclusion

A poem of vast ambition and nebulous structure, *The Seasons* does not offer a clear sequel to the chorographic Herefordshire poetry of John Philips or the commercial geography of John Dyer's *The Fleece*, and consideration of Thomson's geography only covers a portion of the poem's range. Nevertheless, in this chapter I have traced the spatial locations of Thomson's poetry from the relatively confined prospect from Richmond Hill to the grand view of the hydrological cycle wherein Thomson takes a planetary perspective. I have shown how perspectives such as the prospect and the excursion, which were developed in Britain, are expanded and developed by the move abroad. Two contrasting prospects of the torrid zone are needed to express the beauty and the horrors of the region, and Thomson's excursion over the north pole embodies the assumptions of the progress poem in verse that fluidly moves between genres. In the hydrological passage, Thomson's language draws upon Milton's high style, but his scientifically informed perspective, like Philips's use of the microscope, produces a unique vision of physical phenomena. This enthusiasm for rendering scientific concepts in Miltonic language was to influence many eighteenth-century poets, and the effort to reconcile a Miltonic cosmography with a developing understanding of the Earth and the Heavens was to be an ongoing endeavour throughout the poetry of the eighteenth century.

We will see in my fourth chapter how Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Elizabeth Carter and Anna Letitia Barbauld reconciled Milton to Newton in their astronomical poetry, while my fifth chapter will develop the contrast between the scientific prospects of Thomson's *The Seasons* and Richard Jago's *Edge-Hill* and the more personal prospects of Anne Yearsley and Charlotte Smith. First, however, we will turn from *Paradise Lost* to *A Mask Presented at Ludlow* and its history of eighteenth-century adaptation, where in contrast to Thomson's attempt to hold various prospects of the British nation in harmony, the very different settings of each adaptation of *A Mask* embody each author's different perspective on Milton's source text.

Chapter 3: Placing Adaptations: *Sabrina*, *Comus* and *Imogen*.

An unusually rich source text for adaptation during the eighteenth century, John Milton's *A Mask presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634: On Michaelmasse night, before the Right Honorable John Earle of Bridgewater, Viscount Brackly, Lord Præsident of Wales, And one of His Majesties most honorable Privie Counsell* was adapted into an opera, a play and a novel between 1737 and 1783. The success of Milton's masque in various formats came in spite of the fact that the masque genre presented singular problems for adaptors. As *A Mask*'s lengthy title highlights, it was designed for a single performance in which the presence of the audience was as important as that of the actors, and where the former would have risen and mingled with the latter during the closing dances. The unique features of the masque as a genre have been well described by Stephen Orgel.

It attempted from the beginning to breach the barrier between spectators and actors, so that in effect the viewer became part of the spectacle. The end toward which the masque moved was to destroy any sense of theatre and to include the whole court in the mimesis—in a sense, what the spectator watched he ultimately became.¹

Hence Milton's only masque is essentially unstageable as he would have envisaged it.

Specifically designed to be performed on one occasion only, to an audience that would have included John Egerton and other members of the Bridgewater family, as well as many local dignitaries, any subsequent performance of *A Mask* must work around or eliminate features tailored to this single unique performance. The intimate casting of the Earl of Bridgewater's three children as the Lady and her Elder and Younger brothers is one such irreplaceable element, along with the masque's conclusion, where the Earl and Lady Bridgewater would have risen to join their children onstage and perform in the masque's closing dances. More

¹ Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 6.

than any performance of Shakespeare's works, every staging of *A Mask* since the original has been, in the words of Linda Hutcheon, 'its own palimpsestic thing' – the end product of a process of adaptation and a transposition of genre from masque to play.² An awareness of how the context of *A Mask*'s performance affected its theatrical presentation was particularly evident in the 2016 RSC production at the Sam Wanamaker playhouse, where the masque was presented within a framing narrative that envisaged a version of the original Ludlow Castle performance.

It is no longer possible to say, as John Creaser did in 1984, that *A Mask* 'has long been celebrated as a text and patronised as an event.'³ Barbara Breasted's article "Comus and the Castlehaven Affair" first sparked interest in the context of *A Mask* by uncovering a sexual scandal in the Egerton family and speculating that the masque may have functioned in part as a rite of purification.⁴ Leah Marcus's work on the Bridgewater archives has uncovered much of the Earl of Bridgewater's political sympathies, as well as proposing a rape case as an alternative real-world inspiration for the plot.⁵ Critics such as Philip Schwyzer and Michael Wilding have identified the significance of borders in *A Mask*, the action of which is set on the contested ground between the Severn and the Wye, between the modern Welsh border and the ancient border described by Geoffrey of Monmouth.⁶ This notoriously lawless border territory adds an extra dimension to the threat with which the sons and daughter of John

² Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York; London: Routledge, 2006), p.9

³ John Creaser, "'The Present Aid of This Occasion': The Setting of Comus", in *The Court Masque*, ed. by David Lindley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 111.

⁴ Barbara Breasted, 'Comus and the Castlehaven Scandal', *Milton Studies*, 3 (1971), 201–24.

⁵ Leah Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Leah Marcus, 'The Milieu of Milton's "Comus": Judicial Reform at Ludlow and the Problem of Sexual Assault', *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 25.4 (1983), 293–327.

⁶ See Philip Schwyzer, 'Purity and Danger on the West Bank of the Severn: The Cultural Geography of A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634', *Representations*, 60 (1997), 22–48; and Michael Wilding, 'Milton's A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634: Theatre and Politics on the Border', *Milton Quarterly*, 21.4 (1987), 1–12.

Egerton, Earl of Bridgewater, must contend. Yet, although much critical effort has been expended upon regaining all the social, geographical and historical nuances of *A Mask's* original context, much less interest has been shown in how the new context of eighteenth-century adaptation altered and reinterpreted the original Miltonic text.

In this chapter, I wish to argue that adaptations of *A Mask* in the eighteenth century transgress the liminal border placement Milton established for his masque, changing the meaning of the masque as it was transposed into new settings. Paolo Rolli's operatic adaptation of *A Mask* can be viewed as a part of his larger effort to restore Milton's early links with Italy and his wider continental reputation by bestowing a neoclassical gloss and a veneer of European culture on Milton's original materials. John Dalton's theatrical adaptation, later truncated into an afterpiece by George Colman, draws the play towards London, replacing Comus's original half-bestial followers with a crowd of fashionable men and women, and associating the Wild Wood of the masque with the delights offered by Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. In an opposing movement, William Godwin's early novel *Imogen: A Pastoral Romance* (1784) projects the plot of *A Mask* outwards and backwards, setting the plot in the wilder terrain of North Wales where an idealised vision of ancient Celtic society is under threat by a proto-aristocratic magician. While all three adaptations mention the masque's original performance at Ludlow Castle in their introductory material, each departs, in different ways, from the masque's original setting.⁷

Paolo Rolli's *Sabrina*.

⁷ Beyond these adaptations, the influence of *Comus* on eighteenth-century poetry is well documented in Havens, *Influence of Milton*, pp.555-8; and John T Shawcross, 'The Deleterious and the Exalted: Milton's Poetry in the Eighteenth Century', in *Milton and the Grounds of Contention*, ed. by Mark R Kelley, Michael Lieb, and John T Shawcross (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003), pp. 11–36.

True to the spirit of border crossings, the first adaptation of *A Mask* to reach the English stage was an operatic adaptation by Paolo Antonio Rolli, an Italian musician, poet, critic, translator and Fellow of the Royal Society who had been living in London since 1716. Rolli's interest in music and literature made him a kind of cultural bridge between England and Italy. During his time in England, where he lived until 1744, he wrote original works in both languages, defended Milton and Ariosto against the criticism of Voltaire, and was responsible for the publication in London of several editions of classic Italian writers such as Ariosto and Boccaccio. He also produced the first Italian translation of *Paradise Lost*, as *Del Paradiso perduto*, of which the first six books were published in 1730, and the last six in 1735.⁸

Rolli's *Sabrina* first appeared at the King's Theatre in Haymarket on April 26th 1737, where it managed a respectable eleven-day run but apparently garnered remarkably poor box office returns.⁹ It was performed entirely in Italian. The music, unfortunately, does not appear to have survived, but the libretto was published in a parallel Italian-English text. It was one of the last works performed by Rolli's employer, the Opera of the Nobility, an opera company set up in 1733 as a rival to Handel's Royal Opera company. It was common in the twentieth century to read the two opera companies along political lines, identifying Handel with King George II and the government of Sir Robert Walpole, and the Nobility Opera with Frederick, Prince of Wales and the Patriot opposition. Recent research by Thomas McGeary has cast doubt on whether such a political polarisation ever existed.¹⁰ It would be tempting to link

⁸ For these details and much of what follows below, I am indebted to George Dorris, *Paolo Rolli and the Italian Circle in London* (The Hague: Mouton., 1967), which remains the fullest biography of Rolli, as well as a helpful alternative to more Handel-centric histories of English opera.

⁹ Colley Cibber gives a figure of thirty-five pounds for a single performance in *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber: With an Historical View of the Stage during His Own Time*, ed. by B R S Fone (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), p.226

¹⁰ The most thoroughgoing rejection of opera as political allegory is Thomas McGeary, *The Politics of Opera in Handel's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). A thoughtful article that acknowledges the difficulties of interpretation but presents a well-developed case for reading opera as political allegory is Suzanne Aspden, 'Ariadne's Clew: Politics, Allegory, and Opera in London (1734)', *Musical Quarterly*, 85.4 (2001), 735–70.

Sabrina to the Whig rehabilitation of Milton, especially since Rolli has links to James Thomson through their shared patroness, the Countess of Hertford, but the opera appears to offer little scope for an allegorical reading. Indeed, the preface, which recounts the original performance of *A Mask*, includes an elaborate compliment on Scroop Egerton, first Duke of Bridgewater: a courtier to George II who was not at all identified with the Patriot Opposition. The most one can say is that perhaps it sought to profit from the renewed attention that the political contestation over Milton's reputation was generating.

Sabrina stands out amongst the Nobility opera productions as unusual: most Nobility operas retold classical or biblical stories. *Sabrina* is the only opera with a British setting and the only one to be based on a literary work by a British author.¹¹ As with Rolli's translation project, it serves as an opportunity to strengthen the links between Milton and Italy, where the young poet spent much of his Grand Tour; in a recent essay, Roberta Klimt calls the opera a 'creative and generous interpretation of Milton's Italianism'.¹² Unlike *Del Paradiso perduto*, however, *Sabrina* is very much an adaptation rather than a translation, including almost no language that can be identified as Milton's, and changing significant details of the plot. For a work that had the potential to please its audience by uniting Italian music and artistry with the work of a British literary hero, Rolli's opera seems surprisingly uncomfortable with using Milton's own text.

An examination of the reputation of Italian opera in England at this period may help explain the severity of these changes, but in order to envisage the difficulties Rolli faced in adapting *A Mask* into operatic form, it is first necessary to give a brief summary of the original. *A Mask* was constructed of three scenes. In the first, the Attendant Spirit descends

¹¹ For a complete list of Nobility operas, see the Appendix to McGeary, *The Politics of Opera in the Age of Walpole*.

¹² Roberta Klimt, "'Il Drama Di Giovanni Milton': An Eighteenth-Century Italian Musical Adaptation of Milton's *A Maske*", *Milton Quarterly*, 51.1 (2017), 23–37 (p. 24).

and explains his mission to assist endangered chastity, describing the Lady and her two brothers as well as the threat posed to them by Comus. Comus then enters with his followers for the lawless revelry of the anti-masque, which is interrupted by the entrance of the Lady. Disguised as a simple shepherd, Comus succeeds in tempting the Lady back to his 'low / But loyal cottage' (320). In the second scene, the two brothers enter and discuss their missing sister. The younger is concerned that she will fall into danger, while the elder is adamant that the power of her chastity will protect her from harm. The Attendant Spirit enters, disguised as a local shepherd, and reveals that the Lady has fallen into the clutches of Comus. The three make plans to rescue her.

The third scene opens in Comus's palace, where the Lady refuses to drink from Comus's enchanted glass and is frozen to her chair by his magic for a long scene of temptation and rebuttal, wherein Comus urges libertinism and luxury and the Lady defends the cause of temperance and chastity. Just as Comus is about to force her to drink, the brothers and the Attendant Spirit enter and drive Comus from the stage. However, since they did not capture Comus, they have no way to free the Lady from her chair until the Attendant Spirit summons Sabrina, goddess of the Severn river, who is able to release her. The Attendant Spirit then leads the siblings home to Ludlow Castle and their parents, who arise from the audience to join in the closing dances before the Spirit reascends to Heaven.

Rolli kept the essential details of the three-act structure intact, but in accordance with operatic practice, broke each act into several different scenes to allow each singer an aria followed by a dramatic exit. Thematically, the masque presented more of a problem. In the original context of the masque, Comus was a richly symbolic figure, as Barbara Lewalski lays out.

With his bestial rout Comus is made to figure on one level Cavalier licentiousness, Laudian ritual, the depravities of court masques and feasts, as well as the unruly holiday pastimes—maypoles, morris dances, Whitsunales—promoted by the *Book*

of Sports Charles I had reissued the previous year. Comus embodies as well the seductive power of false rhetoric and the threat of rape.¹³

A century later, much of that contemporary context was lost. The battle of wills between Comus and the Lady could be read simply as a verbal duel between temperance and luxury, and the difficulty was that opera—an expensive, flamboyant, foreign import—was irreversibly associated with Comus’s side of the argument. Thomas McGeary’s overview of the cultural opposition to opera is telling.

Literary critics claimed opera was an irrational, sensuous art form, sung in a foreign language that violated verisimilitude and decorum. Dramatists and friends of British theatre saw opera and highly paid singers as threats to native talent and dramatic traditions. Social reformers and moralists, continuing in the vein of Jeremy Collier, condemned opera as an expensive offspring of luxury that led to vice, sensuality, and effeminacy, and whose castrato singers posed a sexual threat to women and gender norms. Nationalists object to the presence of foreign art on the London stage, especially at times when Britain was engaged in Continental wars.¹⁴

Adapting a masque by Milton might help to counter some of the nationalist arguments, but to import the character of the Lady into *Sabrina* would have been to give the opera an anti-operatic heroine, speaking the language of the social reformers.

Instead of the three-sibling family central to *A Mask*, Rolli added two family sets of siblings, brother and sister, each of which is engaged to a member of the opposite gender from the other family—so Brunalto is engaged to Grandalma, whose brother Crindoro is engaged to Belcore, Brunalto’s sister. Barring incest, the relationships are about as neat, symmetrical and neo-classical as it is possible to get. Comapes (as the Comus character is known in the opera) threatens this harmonious relationship by summoning a storm that parts the couples. Then, through his magic, he impersonates Brunalto in order to marry Grandalma,

¹³ Barbara Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 63.

¹⁴ McGeary, *The Politics of Opera in Handel's Britain*, p. 1.

while Brunalto is cursed to be continually mistaken for a shepherd until he is guided to Sabrina's fountain, and by the blessing of the goddess his rightful identity is restored. He arrives in time to interrupt Comapses and Grandalma and to show Comapses in his true form, at which Grandalma faints, but, by the power of Sabrina, is revived.

There is very little in the way of Miltonic language in the opera. Key points from *A Mask*, like the Song to Echo or the Lady's paralysis and rescue by Sabrina, are occasionally visible, but the former is merely a brief reference during a storm aria as Brunalto cries 'Ahi! ch'e l'Eco! / E risponde pietosa al mio lamento' [Echo I hear does answer give / To the too piercing grief I vent], and the latter is passed over in less than twenty lines, with the libretto leaving it unclear whether Grandalma has been enchanted by Comapses or has merely fainted.¹⁵ The contest between temperance and indulgence is cut from the plot. Since Comapses impersonates Brunalto, whom Grandalma desires to marry, there is no need to tempt or seduce her, a decision that makes the masque a much more acceptable opera, but excises the thematic heart from Milton's work.

This excision has undoubtedly harmed the work's standing with Miltonists, and Klimt puts the point across strongly when she writes that '[b]y converting Milton's *Maske* into a romantic comedy, lowering the stakes from the preservation of the Lady's sacrosanct virginity to the outcome of some sylvan star-crossed loves, Rolli could be said to misunderstand the masque totally.'¹⁶ I would argue instead that Rolli understood the reputation of Italian opera in eighteenth-century London too well. The structure of *A Mask*

¹⁵ Paolo Antonio Rolli, *Sabrina: A Masque* (London, 1737), pp. 18–19. I use the English translation provided alongside the Italian libretto, which also appears to be by Rolli. No other name is mentioned on the title page; Rolli is known to have provided the English libretto for several of his other operas; and the versification has an awkwardness which suggests a non-native speaker.

¹⁶ Klimt, 'An Eighteenth-Century Italian Musical Adaptation', p.32.

was easily adaptable to the opera, but to adopt Milton's themes of temperance and chastity would have laid Rolli open to repeating the arguments of the opera's cultural enemies.

Klimt finds value in the textual links she draws between *Sabrina* and the works of Tasso and Petrarch, arguing that this is part of Rolli's project of emphasizing the Italian sources of *A Mask*. To complement and contrast with her argument, I would suggest that many elements of Rolli's new plot suggest an attempt to balance these Italian features with plot elements taken from William Shakespeare. Comapses's ability to summon up a storm recalls Prospero's powers in *The Tempest*; a later scene where Sabrina visits Comapses at night to warn him not to pursue Grandalma recalls the haunting of Richard III on the night before the Battle of Bosworth Field; and a story where two sets of couples are lost in a wood and at the mercy of mercurial demi-god would naturally have recalled *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. All three were popular stage productions in eighteenth-century Britain, while *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had an honourable history of operatic adaptation, as John Dryden and William Davenant's *The Tempest; or the Enchanted Island* (1670) and Henry Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (1692). What we seem to be seeing here is an attempt to naturalise Italian opera, if not through faithful adaptation of Milton, then through a combination of popular English plot devices, especially where they offered a potential for additional stage spectacle.

Sabrina also makes the most of the opportunity to flatter British national pride. Although the setting of *Sabrina* is never fully fleshed out beyond its generic pastoral trappings, the opera's conclusion tries to frame itself as a prequel or source text for *A Mask* by prophesying the coming of Milton and the writing of *A Mask*. This is made clear when Brunalto declares to Sabrina 'Vo all' Impresa onde il tuo superno Vanto / D'aurei Carmi farà foggetto altero.' [Thy glory from this enterprize shall spring; / The lofty subject, golden verse shall sing.] Sabrina concurs 'E l'Opra fia di Chi farà col Canto / Che Londra a Smirna non

invidi Omero' [The work itself shall Britain's fame increase; / And British Homer, vie with him of Greece] (*Sab*, pp.52-3). The opera concludes with a song in prophecy of Britain's imperial success: 'Le fue Sponde in ogni etate / Sian temut e fortunate . Per Onore per Bellezza / Per Industria per Ricchezza / Per gran Senno e gran Valor.' [For wisdom, courage, indust'ry; / For riches, honour, beauties, charms, / Both fear'd and bless'd may these shores be] (*Sab*, pp.60-61). In doing so, *Sabrina* appealed to the cultural and economic confidence Britain inherited at the cusp of a trading boom and with the recognition of an internationally famous epic poet. Softening some of the sexual threat and forest dangers of *A Mask*, *Sabrina* frames itself as a silver-age pastoral precursor to Milton's darker, more threatening work. It also makes allowances for its textual infidelity by claiming to be one of the Italian pastoral dramas from which Milton originally drew inspiration—a technique which William Godwin will later adapt for use in *Imogen*.

The failure of the Opera of the Nobility shortly after its performance may have overcast *Sabrina*'s chances, but it was never revived and remains an obscure text. Two critics have offered reasons for its apparent ill-success. For George E. Dorris, the failure of *Sabrina* is evidence of a wider shift in tastes: 'as another, and perhaps decisive, rejection of the principles of neo-classical art in favour of the greater looseness of the English style—an assertion of English provincialism over Continental sophistication.'¹⁷ This assertion of his audience's provincialism would have cut keenly to the heart of Rolli, who was committed to cultural transfer, but it is true that if *Sabrina* was an attempt to add an English flavour to Italian opera, it does not go very far beyond borrowing a few plot motifs from Shakespeare and Milton, and adding a few songs in praise of Britain. Comparing *Sabrina* with John Dalton's *Comus*, Berta Joncus concludes that 'the Italian poet's homage to Milton at London's

¹⁷ Dorris, *Paolo Rolli and the Italian Circle*, p.48-9.

opera house had omitted a strategy fundamental to [Dalton's *Comus*]: preservation of, and elaborate praise for, the original'.¹⁸ This seems justified: compared to Dalton's careful preservation of the language of *A Mask* and his outspoken praise for Milton, the opera is both unfaithful in its adaptation and modest in its compliments. Even Rolli's chosen epithet for Milton, as 'l'Omero Inglese' or the 'British Homer' (*Sab*, 2-3) seems cautious compared with the general idolatry of the era. The phrase, occurring once in the Preface and once in the course of the opera, aligns Milton with continental culture and elevates him to the first rank of epic poets; a high compliment, but Rolli does not go as far as Dryden did in his famous epigram on the frontispiece of Tonson's edition of Milton's poetry.

Three Poets, in three distant Ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The First in loftiness of thought surpass'd;
The Next in Majesty; in both the Last.
The force of Nature cou'd no farther goe:
To make a Third she joynd the former two.¹⁹

Rolli returned repeatedly to this epigram, which exalts Milton above the great epic poets of Europe, complaining in his *Remarks upon M. Voltaire's Essay on the Epick poetry of the European Nations* that 'the two last verses [are] nothing else but a useless explanation of half of the fourth'.²⁰ He took a different tack in addressing an Italian audience in the *Vita di Giovanni Milton* [Life of John Milton] attached to *Del Paradiso perduto*, where he claimed that Dryden's epigram was inspired by epigrams from Italian poets which Milton collected on his travels in Italy. Again, he suggested amending it, this time to admit the Italian poet Torquato Tasso into the epic tradition alongside Homer and Virgil. Dryden's epigram seems to have troubled Rolli, possibly because of its exclusion of any rival influence upon Milton

¹⁸ Joncus, 'His Spirit is in Action Seen', p.10.

¹⁹ John Dryden, 'Epigram' in John T. Shawcross, *Milton: The Critical Heritage*, Vol.1, p.97.

²⁰ Paolo Rolli, *Remarks upon M. Voltaire's Essay on the Epick Poetry of the European Nations* (London: 1728), p.59.

but Homer and Virgil, an idea that was antithetical to Rolli's interest in Milton's Italian elements. The framing of *Sabrina* as a supposed precursor text to one of Milton's earlier works, in the tradition of Torquato Tasso's *Aminta*, means that Rolli's praise for Milton's use of Italian literature is implicit in the opera's hybrid pastoral setting rather than explicit in its libretto.

Like Klimt, I read *Sabrina* as 'a profoundly parallel text', an Anglo-Italian hybrid.²¹ Where Klimt lays emphasis on the presence of classical Italian literature in the opera, I focus on how Rolli's alterations were designed to evade the scorn of English opera critics and embrace some of the features of successful Shakespearean adaptations. Though the opera's status as a Miltonic adaptation is undoubtedly lessened by Rolli's decision to excise the themes of temperance and chastity from the opera entirely, its hybrid pastoral setting makes an implicit comment on Milton's use of Italian pastoral drama, and its commercial failure isolates elements such as textual fidelity and Miltonic idolatry that would drive John Dalton's successful stage adaptation the following year. The relationship between the opera and the play is not wholly adversarial, however. If, as Julian Herbage speculates, Rolli's opera 'provided the incentive for John Dalton to adapt Milton's masque to the English stage', then later abridgements of Dalton's play will again emphasise operatic elements at the expense of textual fidelity, foregrounding the music by Thomas Arne and the festivity and merriment displayed in the role of Comus.

John Dalton's *Comus*.

²¹ Klimt, 'An Eighteenth-Century Italian Musical Adaptation', p.35.

Rolli's operatic flop obviously failed to dent the confidence of theatrical producers in Milton as a commodity, for less than a year later on March 4th 1738, another version of *A Mask* appeared at Drury Lane, under the name of its chief villain, *Comus*. The play was a much greater success than the opera. It was performed eleven times in its first season and would go on to hold the stage, in one form or another, until well into the nineteenth century. It also popularised the alternative title by which *A Mask*, in spite of the steadily-growing objections of Milton scholars, is still better known.²² The adaptation was the brainchild of John Dalton, who unlike Rolli was extremely fortunate in his timing. *Comus* reached the theatres the year after Walpole's theatrical licensing act of 1737, which instituted a system of government censorship and restricted theatrical productions to the two licensed theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden. This great upheaval in the theatrical world forced the closure of the Haymarket theatre, terminated the career of Henry Fielding as a political playwright, and effectively abolished drama as a vehicle for satire and social commentary.²³ It heralded a turn inwards, and inaugurated a new and studiously non-political theatre, where, in the words of Peter Thomson:

the great issues – of theology, of science, of politics – seldom surfaced. In general, managers collaborated with dramatists in the safer game of feeding off past successes. The majority of 'new' plays, many of them avowedly, were in fact 'old' ones refurbished, and popular 'characters' from the past would reappear with little more than a change of name to distinguish them.²⁴

²² For an early example of the case against the alternative title, see the Introduction to E.H. Visiak and H. J. Foss, eds, *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634* (London: Nonesuch, 1937). I preserve the distinction between *A Mask* and *Comus* throughout.

²³ See Martin C Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life*, ed. by Ruthe R Battestin (London; New York: Routledge, 1989), pp.225-34; and *The London Stage 1660-1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments and Afterpieces, Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment. Part 3, 1729-1747*, ed. by George Winchester Stone (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), I. pp.xlviii-lx.

²⁴ Peter Thomson, *The Cambridge Introduction to English Theatre, 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 115.

Dalton's *Comus* can be read as one of the blueprints for this post-licensing act theatre.

Appearing only a couple of months after the first new play licensed by the Lord Chamberlain reached the stage in January 1738, it was one of a very limited number of fresh productions to appear that year.²⁵ It made changes to *A Mask* in order to expand its spectacle, but retained enough of the original material to claim a much closer kinship to its original than *Sabrina*. Indeed, one of its critics would declare the authenticity of the work increased rather than diminished 'by the addition of many songs, mostly taken from Milton's own works: so that it is rather Milton restored to himself, than altered.'²⁶ In actual fact, the only extra Miltonic material added to *Comus* is a twenty-eight-line insertion from 'L'Allegro' at the beginning of Act III – everything else is either original to *A Mask* or of Dalton's own composition.

This misapprehension over how much of Milton's work is in *Comus* has a surprisingly long literary life. It reappears with slightly different phrasing in David Erskine Baker's *Biographica Dramatica* and the *New Theatrical Dictionary*, and re-emerges even in modern works, such as Dustin Griffin's *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, which talks of songs being 'based on lines from "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso"'. Berta Joncus's, 'His Spirit Is in Action Seen: Milton, Mrs Clive and the Simulacra of the Pastoral in *Comus*' describes Dalton 'weaving extracts from [Milton's] other poems into the original libretto' and even very recently Blaine Greteman's "'To Secure our Freedom", How *A Mask Presented at Ludlow-Castle* became Milton's *Comus* claims that 'Dalton interspersed lines from Milton's other works, including *Paradise Lost*, 'L'Allegro' and 'Lycidas'.²⁷ It is about time this recurrent error was finally debunked.

²⁵ In fact, it was only the third new production to appear, after Hildebrand Jacob's *Nest of Plays* and James Miller's *Art and Nature*, both of which sank without trace. See *The London Stage 1660-1880* ed. Arthur H. Scouten (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961) Vol. 3 ii.

²⁶ *London Chronicle*, February 14-17 1767 in *London Chronicle for 1767*, p.167.

²⁷ David Erskine Baker, *Biographica Dramatica* (Dublin, 1782), p.109 ; *New Theatrical Dictionary* (London, 1792), p.45; Dustin Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, p.67; Berta Joncus, 'His Spirit Is in Action Seen: Milton, Mrs Clive and the Simulacra of the Pastoral in

Like *Sabrina*, *Comus* relied upon music for its full effect, but unlike Rolli, Dalton and Arne decided to use the original songs from *A Mask*, set to new tunes and supplemented them with insertions in the native tradition of the ballad opera. Whereas the libretto of *Sabrina* had referred to Milton only briefly at the opera's conclusion, Dalton's prologue opens with Milton front and centre.

Our stedfast Bard, to his own genius true,
Still bade his Muse 'fit audience find tho' few'
Scorning the judgment of a trifling age
To choicer spirits he bequeath'd his page.²⁸

This assumes immediately that the audience are already aware that *Comus* is an adaptation of Milton and will be able to catch the reference to *Paradise Lost*, Book VII, which Dalton refashions into a subtle compliment on the audience's taste. After the dubious taste of the Restoration theatre, the refined theatre-goers of London are framed as the choicer spirits of posterity for whom Milton's work was intended. Dalton also asserts the moral wholesomeness of the play by aligning Milton with the Attendant Spirit in *Comus*, as a force that, 'Thro' mazy errors dark perplexing wood / Points out the path of true and real good, / Warns erring youth, and guards the spotless maid / From spell of magic vice' (p.xi). Finally, Dalton displayed his humility by apologising for the new material which 'we with trembling hand supply' to fit the play for the stage (p.xii). The adaptor's self-effacement emphasises the play's most respectable elements—the incorporation of the majority of Milton's text unchanged, and the masque's moral message—and elides discussion of the less-respectable

Comus', p.10; and Blaine Greteman "'To Secure our Freedom'", How *A Mask Presented at Ludlow-Castle* became Milton's *Comus*,' in *Milton and the Long Restoration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.150.

²⁸ John Dalton, *Comus* (London, 1790), p.xi. This helpful edition provides line numbers for the speeches, as well as indicating through its textual apparatus which sections of the performance were omitted when the mask was trimmed down by George Colman in 1777 to be performed as an afterpiece. I therefore use it by preference over the 1951 Musica Britannia edition edited by Julian Herbage, which is designed primarily for musicians. Unless otherwise stated, all further references to *Comus* are to the 1790 edition, and will be given parenthetically in the body of the text.

nature of his own additions, which give Comus and his rout more songs, dances and stage time.

The play begins, as in *A Mask*, with the descent of the Attendant Spirit. However, it soon becomes apparent that an emphasis on neoclassical doubling is not limited to Rolli's *Sabrina* when a Second Spirit joins him after the first eighteen lines. This signals both Dalton's determination to preserve Milton's verse, and his intention to fit it for the eighteenth-century stage. The lengthy opening speech to the audience offended the decorum of the neoclassical theatre, and was later scorned by Samuel Johnson as 'a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatic representation, that no precedents can support it.'²⁹ Dalton's division of it between two speakers mitigates the offence, whilst clearly defining their roles. One of them, in the person of Thyrsis, will bring the brothers to the Lady's assistance, while the other descends invisibly in the midst of Comus' feast to offer spiritual support to the Lady amid her temptation. Thus, the pair of Attendant Spirits defend the virtue of the masque's protagonist by bringing physical aid and offering mental counsel respectively.

Dalton's changes to the Attendant Spirit's prologue also begin the process of transferring Milton's geography from the 1634 original to the London stage. Much of the threat in *A Mask* arose from its setting in the dangerous and lawless regions of the Welsh-English border. Dalton includes the lines about the Earl of Bridgewater 'a noble peer of mickle trust and power' arriving to govern 'An old and haughty nation proud in arms', but his conclusion cuts the children's presentation to their father entirely. When Dalton has the Attendant Spirit tell us there is 'No place but harbours danger; / In ev'ry region virtue finds

²⁹ Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations on Their Works*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), p.281. In fact, there are numerous precedents, both in the masque genre and in Shakespeare's plays.

a foe' (I 72-3), the threat posed by Comus is no longer confined to the wild border regions, but is a type of the temptations that every virtuous soul faces. As Rodrigue argues, 'Dalton shifts attention away from the Marches and Wales as a wild land that threatens the children's safety and towards the threat of Comus specifically'.³⁰ Comus is already being shaped as a more specifically moral-allegorical threat than he was in *A Mask*, and while the original Ludlow setting is not erased from the text, it is definitely moved to the background.

The portrayal of Comus's followers is also updated to make it relevant to a new setting, in a textually intricate blend of Milton's verse with new material. In Milton, after describing Comus's origin, the Spirit goes on to describe how Comus recruits unwary travellers to his ranks by tricking them into drinking out of his cup.

Soon as the Potion works, their human count'nance,
Th'express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd
Into som brutish form of Woolf, or Bear,
Or Ounce, or Tiger, Hog, or bearded Goat,
All other parts remaining as they were,
And they, so perfect is their misery,
No once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before
And all their friends, and native home forget
To roule with pleasure in a sensual stie. (*Mask*, 68-77)

Dalton manages to preserve the whole of this passage, but in between lines 72 and 73, he inserts the information that 'when he walks his tempting rounds, the sorcerer / By magic pow'r their human face restores / And outward beauty to delude the sight' (*Com*, I. 102-4). Hence, when Comus makes his grand entrance in the following scenes, he is accompanied by 'a rout of Men and Women dressed as Bacchanals' (*Com*. I. 142.sd), instead of 'a rout of Monsters headed like sundry sorts of wilde Beasts, but otherwise like Men and Women' (*Mask*, 92.sd). The substitution of vocal and fashionably dressed bacchanals for the mute rout

³⁰ John Luke Rodrigue, 'The Profits of Patriotism: National Allegory in *Comus* (1738)', *Modern Language Review*, 112.1 (2017), 54-81 (p. 59).

of beasts in *A Mask* is one of the ways in which Dalton's wild wood, already drifting free of Milton's border setting, begins to draw closer to the urban life of London. Unlike Milton's confused and bestial anti-masque, the nymphs and bacchanals are highly articulate, sophisticated and musical, singing of pleasure, love and wine in Anacreonic melodies.

*From tyrant laws and customs free
We follow sweet variety;
By turns we drink, and dance, and sing,
Love for ever on the wing.*

*Why should niggard rules control
Transports of the jovial soul?
No dull stinting hour we own;
Pleasure counts our time alone. (Comus I. 194-201)*

In their hedonistic philosophy, they resemble some of the coquettes, beaux, sparks and urban libertines that frequented both the stage and the London streets: an identification strengthened, as we shall later see, when Vauxhall Gardens began to identify itself with the wild wood of *Comus*.

Dalton provided Comus and his bacchanals with more stage time and a plethora of new songs by the insertion of two new episodes into the plot. Firstly, in a scene which both mirrors and anticipates Comus' attempted seduction of the Lady, a group of female bacchanals stumble upon the two brothers and the Attendant Spirit and attempt to woo them into drinking from the nectared cup and joining their throng. They are, of course, spurned with indignation. Secondly, the Lady's temptation scene is made much more complex through the insertion of the new character of Euphrosyne, borrowed from Milton's 'L'Allegro' but recast as a kind of libertine antithesis of the Lady's chastity. She is given songs with lines such as 'Farewell lovers, when they're cloy'd / If I am scorn'd because enjoy'd' (III, 90-1) and 'All I hope of mortal man / Is to love me whilst he can' (III, 100-1). She forms part of the new emphasis on Comus's rout as independent agents rather than mute stooges of their leader's will, which leads to a concomitant de-escalation in the sexual threat of the piece. The

assignment of multiple actors, male and female, to the seduction scene, rather than leaving it to Comus alone, changes the context. The attempt is now to seduce the Lady to the whole libertine lifestyle by a variety of dances and songs, rather than by the speeches and the personal charms of Comus alone. Once the characters and genders are diversified, the scene loses some of its connotations of sexual threat and becomes a more straightforward discourse between virtue and vice.

Leah S. Marcus, in her introduction to *A Mask*, argued that it 'has a special status among his works because of its attention to, and sympathy for, women', and finds the Lady positioned as a 'spokeswoman for a cause well beyond her own chastity'.³¹ This special status seems somewhat eroded in *Comus*, where Comus's own inheritance from his mother Circe in the form of his transformative magic is no longer evident, while his descent from Bacchus is brought to the fore. The introduction of a temptation scene for the brothers means that their sister's predicament is no longer unique, and less central to the plot. Finally, although *Comus* introduces far more women to the stage than *A Mask*, in the persons of pastoral nymphs, naiads, female bacchantes and Euphrosyne, there is no sense of community between them. One of the musical highlights of Comus' feast in the third act would have been the two ballads, the first sung by the pastoral nymph, and the second sung by Euphrosyne. The antagonism between these two is aptly expressed in the stage directions.

After this dance the pastoral Nymph advances slow, with a melancholy and desponding air, to the side of the stage, and repeats, by way of soliloquy, the first six lines, then sings the ballad. In the meantime she is observed by EUPHROSYNE, who by her gesture expresses to the audience her different sentiments of the subject of her complaint, suitably to the character of their several songs. (III, 49, s.d.)

The nymph's song is a lament for her desertion by her faithless lover, Damon; Euphrosyne's ballad is a forthright invitation to libertinism. The conflict of these two viewpoints takes

³¹ Leah S. Marcus, 'John Milton's *Comus*' in *A New Companion to Milton*, ed. by Thomas N. Corns (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p.254.

place in mime, and is never resolved in the dialogue or the stage directions, as Euphrosyne's unsympathetic reaction to the plight of the pastoral nymph precludes a sense of sisterhood in adversity. The Lady, for her part, ignores Euphrosyne altogether, and despite the several songs Euphrosyne sings to her, she keeps her complaints and thanks for the moment when the second Attendant Spirit descends to bolster her resolve by a song, and she addresses her defence of chastity (as in *A Mask*) to Comus alone. There never seems to be a space where the chaste and the libertine woman can interact – no exclusively feminine portion of the masque.

This is further emphasised when Sabrina makes her entrance without the personal history carefully outlined in *A Mask*. The first Attendant Spirit describes her as 'a virgin pure / That sways the Severn stream' (III, 346-7), but leaves out her history of persecution by her stepmother Guendolen, which led her to drown herself in the Severn. The two women no longer share a common victimhood, and the first Attendant Spirit's choice of Sabrina to rescue the Lady now seems a little out of place in the altered, urban context of *Comus*.

The addition of a brief epilogue underscores the curious point that in neither *Comus* nor *A Mask* is the Lady given lines to speak after her rescue by the Attendant Spirit and her brothers. In Kathleen Wall's analysis of *A Mask*, 'Her experience with Comus has allowed her to test herself. Her subsequent wordlessness suggests that her strength is, however, not much use to her in the patriarchal world; that it is, in fact, either demanded or taken for granted.'³² In *Comus* the point is emphasised still further: the Lady, embracing her brothers, is returned to the patriarchal fold, and silently allows her brothers to sum up her plight and draw the moral from the tale. 'Here spotless innocence has found relief, / By means as wondrous as her strange distress' (III, 406-7). The fact that the new theatrical epilogue is given to Euphrosyne,

³² Kathleen Wall, '*A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle: The Armour of Logos*' in *Milton and the Idea of Woman* ed. by Julia M. Walker (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois press, 1988), p.60.

and not to her, further emphasises her movement from the centre towards the periphery of the tale. If, as Leah S. Marcus says, *A Mask* is 'a work that displays a rare, unsettling capacity to dismantle the traditional discourse of authority' then *Comus* can be seen as reinforcing that patriarchal authority, at the expense of the centrality and agency of the Lady.³³ The new temptation sequence makes it clear that the brothers represent active resistance to the powers of vice, but the Lady remains in a passive role, with the focus on her resistance to Comus diffused across the other characters. By reinventing *A Mask* as a moral fable, much of Milton's original preoccupation with female chastity is absorbed into a more general discourse of vice and virtue.

Critics on *Comus*—from commercial exploitation to political allegory

The simplification of Milton's moral message in *Comus* did not deter its audience, however, and the play had the largest commercial success of any stage adaptation of Milton to date. This triumph, however, must be weighed against the fact that Milton, who never had a high opinion of the Restoration theatre, would probably have rejected it as one of the 'common Interludes' he decries in the preface to *Samson Agonistes*.³⁴ The critical response to *Comus* has tended to work around this stigma of popularity in interesting ways. Alwin Thaler, the first modern critic to respond to it, was outraged by the liberties Dalton took with an English classic.

[T]he adaptor lowered the tone of the piece until it rang no longer with the music of its own speary chime but echoed and re-echoed the riot and ill-managed merriment of the eighteenth-century stage. [...] He cures Milton's tedious instructiveness by making vice as seductive, and virtue as stupid, as possible.³⁵

³³ Leah S. Marcus, 'Justice for Margery Evans: A "Local" reading of *Comus*' in *Milton and the Idea of Woman*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois press, 1988), p.82.

³⁴ Milton, *The Complete Works of John Milton, Volume II: The 1671 Poems: Paradise Regain'd and Samson Agonistes*, p.67.

³⁵ Alwin Thaler, 'Milton in the Theatre', *Studies in Philology*, 27 (1920), 269–308 (p. 291).

No-one later in the century would condemn *Comus* in quite such dyspeptic terms, but Dustin Griffin sites the later adaptations of *Comus* on a new border—‘the borderline between serious art and popular ephemera, creative use of Miltonic poetry and mere commercial exploitation.’³⁶ For him, the integrity of the adaptation is redeemed by the success of the production in making Milton accessible to a wider audience, and by their wish to develop possibilities left unrealised in the original masque. Don-Jon Dugas turns this line of critical argument on its head, arguing that due to the phenomenal and largely unexamined success of *Comus*,

the current state of criticism on Milton's reception in eighteenth-century London does not accurately reflect the actual experience of eighteenth-century Londoners [...] No doubt Milton was the author of the great English epic, but he was also the writer associated with one of the most popular English operas of the eighteenth century.³⁷

In other words, rather than take Milton’s adaptors to task for commercialising him, we need instead to revise our image of Milton’s eighteenth-century reputation to incorporate the image of Milton as popular entertainer. The argument is thought-provoking, but it takes Milton to be the only figure associated with *Comus*. In fact, during later productions, the music by Thomas Arne became an equally celebrated part of the masque, and the truncated adaptation by George Colman proudly bears the bankable name of its adaptor, a celebrated writer and theatrical manager. The success of *Comus* is not to be credited to the force of Milton’s reputation alone.

³⁶ Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, p. 68.

³⁷ Don-John Dugas, ‘“Such Heav’n-Taught Numbers Should Be More than Read”: *Comus* and Milton’s Reputation in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England’, *Milton Studies*, 34 (1996), 137–57 (p. 155).

The most recent criticism of *Comus* vindicates the importance of the 1738 production by reading it as a political allegory. Two very recent essays, by Blaine Greteman and John Luke Rodrigue, have presented a very different view of the masque, not as an alternative to the kind of political theatre that provoked Walpole to the imposition of the Theatrical Licensing Act, but as a covertly anti-Walpole political allegory.³⁸ According to Rodrigue, who works out the allegory in its fullest form,

The Lady becomes Britannia, a personification of the imperilled British nation. Her brothers represent the Boy Patriots, the great hope of mid-1730s opposition. Comus figures forth Robert Walpole, a symbol of enervating luxury and corrupt political wizardry.³⁹

If true, this appealing reading would revolutionise our understanding of the play and its importance. Consulting a wide range of patriot writing by James Thomson, David Mallet, George Lillo and others, as well as a thorough review of the political background of this period of the eighteenth century, Rodrigue provides a wide range of allegorical parallels for key scenes and figures, and presents a compelling case for his interpretation. His final appeal, however, is to the ‘alchemy of association’, which reveals the central flaw of the allegorical argument. As evidence that *Comus* can be read as a sophisticated political allegory, Rodrigue’s essay is entirely self-sufficient. The existence of the essay’s allegorical reading validates the premise that an allegorical reading is possible. What is needed to develop this conclusion further is evidence either that the author intended an allegory, or that the contemporary audience of *Comus* received it as such. Christine Gerrard’s reading of James Thomson’s *Castle of Indolence* as a political allegory is convincing because Gerrard is able to recover evidence of Thomson’s political convictions and literary and political activity.⁴⁰

³⁸ Blaine Greteman, “‘To Secure Our Freedom’: How A Mask Presented at Ludlow-Castle Became *Milton’s Comus*”; Rodrigue, ‘Profits of Patriotism’. It is not apparent which scholar has priority as neither cites the other, but my argument deals largely with Rodrigue’s claims, as his allegory is worked out to the largest and most detailed extent.

³⁹ Rodrigue, ‘Profits of Patriotism’, p. 55.

⁴⁰ Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*.

Evidence that eighteenth-century audiences consumed Shakespeare as a political allegory on their own times is considerable, including government discussion as to whether a reprinted copy of John of Gaunt's speech from *Richard II* was legally actionable.⁴¹ There is no resource to support a similar reading of John Dalton's *Comus*.

Rodrigue performs as extensive a search into John Dalton's background as the surviving records will permit. He makes an effort to deduce Dalton's politics by association with the politics of his patrons, the Seymour family, but is not able to produce an anecdote or statement of intent that would give the political allegory a more secure footing.⁴² Greteman pays more attention to the eighteenth-century theatrical audience, but in the absence of a contemporary account of the first performance, all he is able to say is that James Quin's 'colossal embodiment of the corrupt authoritarian Comus must have recalled, in at least a few minds, popular caricatures of the corpulent Prime Minister as the "great man" bestriding the world'.⁴³ If this is true (and it is impossible to disprove) then it does not seem to have instituted anything like the kind of furore that surrounded James Thomson's *Agamemnon* published later that month. No sign of the political allegory is visible in the eighteenth-century newspapers in the Burney collection, and *Comus* is not noticeable among the many pseudonyms under which Sir Robert Walpole was celebrated and condemned.⁴⁴

I have been fortunate in being able to consult a resource unavailable either to Rodrigue or Greteman: the manuscript copy of *Comus* submitted to the theatrical censor and

⁴¹ See Liesenfeld, *The Licensing Act*, p.154.

⁴² See Rodrigue, 'Profits of Patriotism', p.76-77.

⁴³ Greteman, 'To Secure Our Freedom', p.152. It is worth noting that while no illustrations of Quin in the role survive, most eighteenth-century pictures of Comus are elegant rather than gross: see Jan Piggot, 'Milton's Comus: From Text to Stage, the Fine Arts, and Book Illustration, c1750-1850', *The British Art Journal*, 15: 2 (2014), 18-33.

⁴⁴ Don-Jon Dugas surveys the original press response to *Comus* in 'Comus and Milton's reputation' and his conclusions are borne out by my own researches in the Burney Collection. For a partial list of Walpole's pseudonyms, see J. A. Downie, 'Walpole, "the Poet's Foe"', in *Britain in the Age of Walpole*, ed. by Jeremy Black (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p.171.

preserved in the Larpent Manuscript collection in the Huntington Library, Los Angeles. In common with most of the Larpent Manuscripts, there is no physical evidence of the censor's direct intervention, or the excision of potentially offensive passages. While there are only minor differences between this version and the published text, those that are present do not appear harmonious with Rodrigue's reading of the play. The chief area of alteration is in the stage directions and the songs in the third act, as seems natural in view of the complicated staging of this extravagant finale, but a concern to soften Comus's predatory sexuality is also shown in the scene where he first observes the Lady.

~~So rich a Treasure with defray the Carriage.~~ I'll ease her of that care and be her guide. 45

The objectifying, sexualised tone of Comus's line has been struck out during revision, and a more neutral line substituted, weakening the reading of Comus as a sexual predator and making him more appealing to his audience—an unlikely act if, as Rodrigue and Greteman contend, Comus is intended to symbolise the Whig Prime Minister Robert Walpole. Another passage that gels awkwardly with Rodrigue's reading is the stage directions regarding the entrance of Euphrosyne, which are given in a fuller form than the published text.

While these lines are repeating enter a Nymph drest
Chiefly as a Bachanal representing Euphrosyne
Or mirth, Leading in Liberty, habited also in
Character, they are follow'd by several gay Figures
Mask'd, representing the other Allegorical beings
Mentioned by Milton ⁴⁶

If, as Rodrigue and Greteman argue, words like 'virtue' and 'liberty' have acquired such currency in Patriot discourse that their mere mention is a clue to the masque's allegorical reading, then the allegory must have become very confused when Dalton pictured Euphrosyne, the symbol of mirth, leading in Liberty to assist in the temptation of the Lady,

⁴⁵ John Dalton, 'Comus: A Mask' (Los Angeles, Huntington Library, Larpent MS 6), f.10r.

⁴⁶ Dalton, 'Comus', f.26v-27r.

or Britannia. 'Liberty' in the Thomsonian sense, would have been Britannia's personal ally, but the figure of Liberty we see here stands for sexual rather than political liberty.

The fact that this stage direction did not make it to the printed text could perhaps indicate that Dalton realised this contradiction and corrected the manuscript before its printing, but this does show that if there was a political allegory intended, it was not uppermost in his mind. In the end, the play attracted little controversy and reached the stage without generating the kind of furore that attended the banning of James Thomson's *Edward and Eleonora*.

I feel that Greteman is on firmer ground in the second half of his essay, where he asserts the moral orthodoxy of *Comus* by comparing it with contemporary pedagogical literature also printed by Dalton's publisher, Robert Dodsley. His analysis captures the way that the theme of *Comus* has changed in adaptation from a specific focus on female chastity to a general preoccupation with temperance. He concludes that 'The *Mask* had become proto-*Pamela*, transformed from a poem celebrating a noble family to a refined expression of the middle-class morality'.⁴⁷ This reflects the self-congratulatory tone of the contemporary reviews of *Comus*, which applaud the audience's attentiveness to long passages of moral exposition.

The adapting this *Masque to the Stage* [...] was at first thought an Attempt which would never answer in the Success, as it was imagin'd that the *Town* would not taste Milton's Beauties, or at least think it too heavy an entertainment for a whole Evening, to hear only fine *poetical Sentiments* and *moral Instructions*; but the Event is the very Reverse, every night that it has been performed the Audience received it with the utmost Satisfaction and Delight, and were no where more attentive than in those Scenes where there are such excellent Lessons of Morality.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Greteman, 'To Secure Our Freedom', p.58.

⁴⁸ 'The Public unjustly blam'd for want of Taste' in *The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle*, March 1738, p.152.

Comus allowed its audience to enjoy the songs, dances and spectacles of vice that Comus and Euphrosyne offered, whilst the cultural prestige of Milton and the masque's strong rhetorical defence of virtue made it easy for them to applaud their own literary and moral taste. Unlike Rolli, Dalton does not alter Milton so far as to close his play with the main characters on the brink of marriage, but Greteman's comparison of *Comus* with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* allows us to acknowledge how well the play merges with one of the stock plots of the emerging novel, wherein the ingénue hero or heroine is confronted with the glittering vices of society but is able to stand firm against them. This shared theme allows us to look forward to William Godwin's 1783 adaptation of *A Mask* as the novel *Imogen*, but first, I want to analyse the impact of *Comus* across its extended performance run, including its abridgement by George Colman.

The Reception of Dalton's *Comus*

'Pure Poetry unmixed with passion, however admired in the closet, has scarce ever been able to sustain itself on the stage', as George Colman warns us in the Advertisement to the text of his condensed *Comus*, which first appeared as an afterpiece in 1777.⁴⁹ Cutting the introduction by the attendant spirit and trimming speech and dialogue back to the bare minimum, Colman shortens the masque by about fifty percent, ensuring there is never a long period between the songs that, for him, defined the popularity of the piece. Opening with Comus instead of the attendant spirits, the Colman version accentuates the villain's importance and by Colman's own admission, heightens 'the festivity of the Character of Comus' rather than his sexual threat.⁵⁰ In the assertion that 'the Masque of Comus, with all its poetical beauties, [...] maintained its place on the Theatre chiefly by the assistance of the

⁴⁹ George Colman, *Comus: A Masque* (London: 1777), A3r.

⁵⁰ Colman, *Comus*, f.A3v.

Musick', and in the distillation of the drama down to its essential elements of kidnap and rescue, temptation and resistance, Colman goes some way to closing the gap between Rolli's loose operatic adaptation and Dalton's reverent handling of the material.⁵¹ The cut-down *Comus* does not go so far as to burlesque its source material in the manner of a performance troupe like the Reduced Shakespeare Company, but it places the music of the play far ahead of the Miltonic verse that Dalton had found such cultural cachet in preserving. In this, it is typical of the later development of the masque, and its capacity to acquire meanings that neither Milton nor Dalton would have intended.

The enormous success of *Comus* can be gauged by its impressive performance record. With eleven performances in its first season and sixty performances at Drury Lane by 1760, Dalton's version remained popular across two decades, and Colman's abridgement held the stage until the end of the century.⁵² In the sphere of print, *Comus* went through four editions in 1738 alone and continued to be reprinted across the century, earning a place in theatrical anthologies such as *Bell's British Theatre*. We can also trace its success in the provinces in the small number of occasional prologues and epilogues preserved in collections of occasional poetry, which indicate successful amateur provincial performances.⁵³ Dalton's lines were mistaken for Milton's own and quoted as such in Samuel Derrick's *Poetical Dictionary*, and a garbled version of one of Dalton's airs even turn up in Tobias Smollet's *Roderick Random*, when a Lieutenant bursts into 'Would task the moon-ty'd hair / To yon

⁵¹ Ibid., f.A3r.

⁵² For new adaptations and stagings after 1815, see Edward Peple, 'Notes on Some Productions of *Comus*', *Studies in Philology*, 36 (1939), 235–42.

⁵³ These include Samuel Whyte, 'Prologue to *Comus*, performed at Marlay, the Seat of the Rt. Hon. David Latouche' in *A collection of poems on various subjects* (Dublin, 1792) p.60-3; William Dodd, 'Prologue to *Comus*, performed by some young Gentlemen, before their Parent and Relations' in *Poems* (London, 1767) p.88-9; and the performance at Exton in Rutland described in Betty Matthews, 'Unpublished Letters Concerning Handel', *Music and Letters*, 40 (1959), 261–68.

flagrant beau repair', a burlesquing of Dalton's 'Would you taste the noon-tide air, / To yon fragrant bow'r repair' (*Comus*, II, 272).⁵⁴

However, to fully trace the impact of *Comus* upon eighteenth-century popular culture is a task made difficult by the simultaneous presence and popularity of *A Mask* in the same sphere. It is evident that there is more than one conception of the character, since in *The Influence of Milton*, Raymond Dexter Havens tells us 'I have collected over twenty passages in which the god Comus is spoken of with apparently no thought of Milton.'⁵⁵ Sadly, he does not provide us with the list, merely noting that the latest example is in Lord Byron's early satire, *English Bards and Scots Reviewers*. To distinguish the Comus of Milton's own conception from that of the Dalton adaptation and the interpretation to which actors such as James Quin, William Havard and Anthony Webster brought to the role, it is necessary to examine the way these two interpretations differ, where they overlap, and where they come into conflict.

Jonathan Bate's work on the character of Euphrosyne demonstrates one way of doing so. In 'Shakespeare and the Rival Muses: Siddons versus Jordan' he draws upon two portraits of Dorothea Jordan: John Hoppner's famous painting of 1786, 'Mrs Jordan in the character of the Comic muse, supported by Euphrosyne, who represses the advances of a satyr', and an anonymous 1814 engraving titled, 'Mrs Jordan. From an Original Picture in the possession of the Duke of Clarence. In the Character of Euphrosyne.' Jordan's pose is identical in both works, but the engraver's decision to recast her as Euphrosyne instead of Thalia and remove

⁵⁴ Ann Grossman and George W Whiting, 'Dalton's Comus Again', *Notes and Queries*, 6 (1959), 220–21; B. Eugene McCarthy, 'Comus and Derrick's Poetical Dictionary', *Milton Quarterly*, 3 (1969), 19–20. Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. by Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1979), p.325. See also Lewis M Knapp, 'Smollett's Verses and Their Musical Settings in the Eighteenth Century', *Modern Language Notes*, 46 (1931), 224–32. p.229-30 In the same author's *Humphrey Clinker* the actor James Quin, who had played the role to great acclaim in 1738, is described as 'a priest of Comus' in his cups.

⁵⁵ Havens, *Influence of Milton*, p.28n.

her companion figure radically changes the context. In Hoppner's portrait the pair of them are rejecting the satyr and going on their own way. In the engraving she is caught mid-turn, the eroticism of her posture no longer unconscious, and the satyr peeping from behind the tree is unreprieved. Bate makes clear the difference between the neutral representation of the classical figures and the specific erotic associations with *Comus*.

as the Euphrosyne of *Comus*, Jordan becomes the agent of seduction rather than the victim of it (as she is in the original painting). The engraving makes the comic actress into the very thing that Hoppner wanted to suggest she was not: a wanton temptress.⁵⁶

A similar kind of bifurcation, I believe, is evident in the character of Comus in the eighteenth century. The most in-depth account of a contemporary performance of *Comus* that I have uncovered is, 'Playhouse Ctiticisms: In a Letter from a country Gentleman to the Author' [sic], published in the *British Magazine* for October 1749. Here the writer, implicitly anticipating a Comus modelled after James Quin's original performance in the role, expects to see 'all the spirit and gayety of a God of Revels' and is grievously disappointed to find 'all the stupidity of a Dutch burgomaster.'⁵⁷ We are used to considering Milton's Comus as a somewhat sinister figure, a kidnapper and would-be seducer. The Dalton adaptation gives us Comus as a figure of fun, a master of revels. It is this figure that is alluded to in several anthologies of witty stories, repartees and songs released under the anonymous imprint of 'a member of Comus' court', and in the bust of the demi-god himself which adorned the sideboard of Sir Thomas Robinson, social entertainer and manager of Ranelagh gardens.⁵⁸ A

⁵⁶ Jonathan Bate, 'Shakespeare and the Rival Muses: Siddons versus Jordan' in *Notorious Muse: The Actress in British Art and Culture, 1776-1812*, ed. by Robyn Asleson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p.85.

⁵⁷ George Arch. Creaves, 'Playhouse Ctiticisms: In a Letter from a Country Gentleman to the Author' in *The British Magazine* October 1749, 411-16, (p.413).

⁵⁸ The earliest of the anthologies is *Tales to Kill Time Or, a New Method to Cast off Care, and to Cure Melancholy, Vapours, and All Hypochondriacal Complaints. By the Society of the Court of Comus* (London, 1757); while the latest is *The Temple of Mirth or Fete of Comus & Bacchus, Containing a Most Extensive Collection of Original Bon Mots, Jests, Reparteen, &c.* (London, 1800). The bust at

particularly interesting case study in this developing conception of Comus is the character's appearances in Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, where we can see a conflict developing between Milton's conception of the character and Dalton's.

In the eighteenth century Vauxhall was still separate and distinct from the expanding City of London, on the border between the town and the country. Highlighting its separation from the city, the most popular way to access the pleasure grounds was by boat up the Thames. The journey itself was part of the pleasures Vauxhall offered, which included urban sophistication, pastoral imitation, music, dancing and popular spectacles such as hot air balloons, and fireworks. The link between Vauxhall Gardens and Dalton's *Comus* has been explored by Bertha Joncus, who focusses on Kitty Clive, the first actress to play Euphrosyne, rather than on *Comus* itself. Her examination of the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens under the management of John Tyers draws on the theories of Jean Baudrillard to argue that the Pleasure Gardens anticipate the development of the modern theme park in the simulation of 'a pastoral theatre where goings-on in the bushes conveniently removed themselves to an "imaginary realm."' ⁵⁹ Tyers, she argues, grafted Dalton's *Comus* upon this existing project in order to foster an atmosphere of Arcadian license 'where the boundaries between innocence and concupiscence faded.' ⁶⁰ The presence of Comus in the Vauxhall Gardens, in an attempt by the managers to merge the Pleasure Gardens with the Wild Wood, is evidence of the uneasy distinction that existed between Comus as master of revels and Comus as seducer.

In 1748, a Temple of Comus was erected in Vauxhall Gardens, taking the form of a large semi-circular colonnade, of classical design, interrupted in its centre by an idiosyncratic

Ranelagh is celebrated in occasional poetry by George Doddington, Lord Melcombe, and Philip Dormer Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield: see Doddington, 'Verses under the busto of Comus in a buffet at Hammersmith' in *Specimens of the Later English Poets: With Preliminary Notices, Volume 2*, ed. by Robert Southey, (London, 1807), p.299 and Stanhope, 'Lines written under the Bust of Comus, in a convivial room' in *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, Wednesday, May 29, 1776.

⁵⁹ Joncus, 'His Spirit is in Action Seen', p.28.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.33.

fairy-tale pavilion. One of three separate 'piazzas'—the other two were known as the 'Handel piazza' and the Gothic piazza—it was designed as a box for supper parties, as a musical auditorium, and as an exhibition of the artistic and architectural extravagance associated with the gardens. Its reign was brief, since it was remodelled within two years and renamed the Chinese pavilion, though its elaborate embellishments are more fantastical than oriental. Some small critical confusion still prevails about this building: Joncus is at a loss to explain why a structure she identifies as the Chinese Pavilion is labelled in prints as the Temple of Comus, while David Coke and Alan Borg, in their history of the gardens, argue that the reference is to 'the god of cheer and good food, "First father of sauce, and deviser of Jelly" who appears in Ben Jonson's masque *Pleasure reconciled to Virtue*.'⁶¹ The Jonsonian figure is hardly a fit contrast to the Miltonic one, however, for he is a grotesquely corpulent Belly-god, who 'some in derision call the father of farts'; moreover, having appeared in 1618, he is over a century out of date.⁶²

Dalton's *Comus*, however, still retained possession of the London stage as a vital part of the repertoire. In the aforementioned 1749 article 'Playhouse Ctiticisms' [sic] the critic expresses his disgust at the appearance of Comus' palace in the third act of a new revival at Drury Lane:

a gaudy piece of scenery displayed itself, to the infinite joy of the galleries; and the satisfaction visible in [the manager's] face, behind the scenes, from the place where I sat, plainly express'd, that he had meant to feast the eyes with this pompous piece of architecture, and thought it by no means necessary to entertain the ears and the understanding at the same time.⁶³

⁶¹ David Coke and Alan Borg, *Vauxhall Gardens: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 69.

⁶² Ben Jonson, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* in *Ben Jonson : The Complete Masques*, ed. by Stephen Orgel (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1969), ll. 11, 54-5. For an interesting discussion of representations of Comus before his appearance in *A Mask*, see Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, pp.152-6.

⁶³ Creaves, 'Playhouse Ctiticisms', p.143. The 'Grand Scene of Comus's Palace' also had a prominent place on the handbill: see the entry for October 1749 in Stone, I. p.143 The new scenery was probably necessary in order to distinguish the play from the Covent Garden production of the preceding season.

This emphasis on an architecturally ornate palace of Comus mirrors the Temple of Comus in Vauxhall Gardens, and the effect was clearly reciprocal. In a pamphlet puffing the gardens at Vauxhall, John Lockman records Comus proclaiming at the conclusion of the play that 'In the grove at Vaux-hall, I, this night, fix my throne.'⁶⁴ If Lockman's account is accurate, it was probably at this 1749 staging of *Comus* that the additional epilogue was spoken, cementing the connection between the out-of-town pleasure garden and the wild wood of the theatre.

Joncus attempts to project a lengthier cultural heritage by including in her argument the statue of Milton, supposedly by Roubillac, that was a feature in the gardens as far back as 1738, but I find it unlikely they were part of the same project. Milton's statue lay in the northern part of the park, a quiet, secluded area for exploration by more reflective customers. At the opposite extreme of the gardens was the giddy social whirl surrounding the Temple of Comus, close to the main entrance, and the notorious dark walks upon which the Temple bordered. These unlit passages were famous as an assignation spot for lovers and adventurers, and if the Temple of Comus recalls Comus as the master of revels, the dark walks recall the dangerous territory of Milton's original wild wood. It seems likely that despite John Tyer's efforts to associate his gardens with the jovial Comus of the Dalton adaptation, a parallel association with Milton's original darker character, with his ambiguous sexual threat and his penchant for abduction under false pretences, still existed. In Frances Burney's 1778 novel *Evelina*, which contains the most famous fictional depiction of the Vauxhall Gardens, the plot is strikingly similar to the events of *A Mask*. The eponymous heroine is persuaded to take a stroll through the dark walks by the Branghton sisters. As she nears the end of the alley,

a large party of gentlemen, apparently very riotous, and who were hallooing, leaning on one another, and laughing immoderately, seemed to rush suddenly from

⁶⁴ John Lockman, *A Sketch of the Spring Gardens, Vauxhall. In a Letter to a Noble Lord* (London, 1750), pp.22-3.

behind some trees, and meeting us face to face, put their arms at their sides, and formed a kind of circle, which first stopped our proceeding, and then our retreating, for we were presently entirely enclosed. The Miss Branghtons screamed aloud, and I was frightened exceedingly; our screams were answered with bursts of laughter, and for some minutes we were kept prisoners, till at last one of them, rudely seizing hold of me, said I was a pretty little creature.⁶⁵

She is rescued from this uncomfortable situation by an aristocratic acquaintance of hers, Sir Clement Willoughby, only to discover that he is leading her to another part of the dark walks, with intent to seduce her. It is only after prevailing upon him with all her powers that she is able to persuade him to conduct her back to her party. In *A Mask* also the virtuous lady is lost in a dark wood, and subject to an attempted seduction by the leader of a rout of intemperate libertines. The presence of a Temple of Comus in such close proximity to the dark walks might easily have been seen as implicitly condoning such a narrative, particularly by those who did not, or would not distinguish the Daltonic god of revel from the Miltonic seducer.

In 1815, when a new adaptation of *Comus* by Thomas Dibdin appeared in Covent Garden, William Hazlitt reviewed the play for *The Examiner* and was taken aback by William Conway's performance in the title role. It was 'almost as if the genius of a maypole had inspired a human form [...] a totally new idea of the character.'⁶⁶ Attending the play anticipating watching the character as seen in *A Mask* and seeming entirely unaware of the different character he assumes in the theatrical tradition, Hazlitt is scathing in his criticism of the effect: 'He is said to make a very handsome Comus: so he would make a very handsome Caliban; and the common sense of the transformation would be the same.'⁶⁷ Recognising the ideological conflict between rigid virtue and playful libertinism in the adaptation, Hazlitt insists on the essential ugliness of vice, denying the tendency of the theatrical Comus to

⁶⁵ Frances Burney, *Evelina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.195-6. See also T.J. Eldelstein, *Vauxhall Gardens*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Centre for British Art, 1963), p.11-15, which assembles historical accounts of Vauxhall Gardens.

⁶⁶ William Hazlitt, *A View of the English Stage* in *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by A.R. Waller, Arnold Glover, and William Ernest Henley (London: J.M. Dent, 1902), p.231.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

dominate and displace the moral drama. It is here that the adversarial nature of these two conceptions, which remained submerged in Vauxhall Gardens, are brought most clearly to the surface. In spite of Hazlitt's incredulity, the theatrical Comus was now a sophisticated city dweller, and had been so for the last seventy years; his origins in the wild woods of the lawless Welsh Borders seemed to be far behind him. Yet there is one project worth examining, which took up *A Mask* with the goal of re-celticising it, and transforming it into a foundational fiction of ancient British liberty.

William Godwin's *Imogen: A Pastoral Romance*

Comus remained on the stage during the theatrical seasons of 1783-4, albeit in a truncated form, having been cut down into an afterpiece by the writer-manager George Colman.

Meanwhile in a garret in London the author and philosopher William Godwin, soon to be made famous by the publication of *Political Justice* (1793) and *Caleb Williams* (1794), was concluding his early apprenticeship to the novel with the publication of *Imogen: A Pastoral Romance*, in two slim volumes. It was the end of a writing period that had kept him occupied from November 1783 to May 1784. During this time he had produced *Damon and Delia* in ten days, *Italian Letters: or, The History of the Count de St. Julian* in three weeks, and *Imogen* during the first five months of 1784.⁶⁸ The last of the three novels, *Imogen* was also the one which Godwin took the most care in composing. Long thought to be lost, it was not rediscovered and republished until 1963, since when it has received the better part of the small critical attention accorded to Godwin's early trio of fictions.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ William Godwin, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin Vol. I, Autobiography, Autobiographical Fragments and Reflections, Godwin/Shelley Correspondence, Memoirs*, ed. by Mark Philp and Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering, 1992), p. 44.

⁶⁹ The only complete edition of the novel is in the Special Collections at Cardiff University; another edition, missing two pages, is in the New York Public Library.

Later in life, Godwin also attempted to write for the stage, and while his theatrical compositions were not a success, he was an avid theatregoer who attended the playhouses over two thousand times in the course of his life.⁷⁰ Critical interest in his dramas and the importance of the theatre to Godwin's views on politics, education, history and literature is a slowly rising force in Godwinian studies, in opposition to the tendency of biographers to see Godwin's theatrical career as a tragicomic failure.⁷¹ Unfortunately, Godwin's terse but comprehensive diaries, in which he recorded, among other things, all his various visits to the theatre, begin four years after the composition of *Imogen*, leaving us with no evidence of his theatrical excursions at that period. It is impossible to know whether Godwin formulated the inspiration for *Imogen* from watching *Comus* on stage or perusing *A Mask* in his closet: perhaps the likeliest solution is that both productions contributed to the finished novel.

Godwin's preface frames the text as the outcome of a process of translation and adaptation, from Welsh poetry into English prose. Taking on himself the fictional role of Welsh translator, the Norfolk-born Godwin playfully proposes two alternate origins for *Imogen*: firstly, that it is an authentic pre-Christian production by the ancient bard Cadwallo, and that the manuscript inspired Milton in the writing of *A Mask*; secondly, that it was written by one Rice ap Thomas in the reign of William III, who imitated Milton. It is doubtful the ruse was meant to fool any reader, but rather to provide a natural explanation for passages of quotation and paraphrase that might otherwise be jarring. The playful attempt to supplant the precedence of Milton's original by proposing an ancient Welsh bard as the author shows

⁷⁰ David O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010).

⁷¹ For theatrical criticism, see O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre* and Julie A. Carlson, 'Heavy Drama', in *Godwinian Moments: From the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert M. Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 217–38. For the biographical account, see Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 234–46.

Godwin's keenness to display his literary knowledge, and his awareness of the challenges of adaptation.

Sadly, aside perhaps from a moment where the villainous Roderic complains of events 'which, had they been related instead of seen, must have appeared to constitute an absurd and impossible fiction', this playful tone is not evident in the rest of the novel, which the narrator relates with grave and didactic seriousness.⁷² Set in a pre-agricultural pastoral idyll in the Welsh valley of Clwyd, the novel relates the virtuous loves of Imogen and Edwin, who exist in a Rousseau-influenced society of primitive equality. This happy state of affairs is disturbed when Imogen is abducted by the haughty sorcerer Roderic and swept away on his chariot. The distraught Edwin consults with a druid named Madoc, who fulfils the role of the Attendant Spirit in supplying Edwin with an account of Roderic's birth and powers, advice on how to break his enchantments, and a special root or herb that will defend him from their power.⁷³ Imogen, meanwhile, has been conveyed to Roderic's palace, where her pastoral innocence and rural virtue will be tested by the wiles and deceptions of the lustful enchanter.

This imaginary historical Wales is characterised as the Eden from which the rest of Britain has fallen, with the druidic society that Imogen and Edwin belong to exemplifying a similar model of primitive virtue to the Laplanders in Thomson's *The Seasons*. In proposing the Cadwallo-as-author theory, Godwin suggests that Milton, having written *A Mask* in Ludlow, managed to acquire a copy of the hypothetical *Imogen* manuscript on which the masque was based. This alternative history emphasises Ludlow's position as a border between England and Wales, and a site of possible cultural exchange, in a similar manner to

⁷² William Godwin, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin Vol.2, Damon and Delia, Italian Letters, Imogen*, ed. by Mark Philp and Pamela Clemit (London: Pickering, 1992), p. 223.

⁷³ There has been some excellent discussion of the figure of the druid in this novel: see Jane Aaron, *Welsh Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 156-7; Moira Dearnley, *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-Century Fictions of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 114-29.

the way *Sabrina* highlights Milton's use of Italian sources in his masque.⁷⁴ However, while *A Mask* related the story of a group of aristocratic siblings lost in the Welsh borders and threatened by Comus's half-bestial rout, *Imogen* inverts some of these premises by pitting the primitive, virtuous shepherds against the corrupt, sensuous, aristocratic Roderic.

Pamela Clemit, one of the few critics to pay attention to Godwin's early novels, proposes a broad range of other influences besides *A Mask*, including James Macpherson's *The Poems of Ossian* (to which Godwin alludes in his preface), Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Hugh Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Robert Bage's *Mount Henneth*, Thomas Gray's *The Bard* and James Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence*.⁷⁵ This is evidence enough of Godwin's varied reading, but following Blaine Greteman's lead, it is the parallels with *Pamela* (1740) which I find most suggestive. Imogen's mistrust of Roderic's attempts at seduction make an interesting parallel with the struggle of the country girl Pamela to maintain her virginity and virtue against constant assaults by her employer, Mr B.

One of the most entertaining portions of *Imogen* is how Roderic's aristocratic status is insisted upon even in what should be a pre-feudal age.⁷⁶ In his enchanted valley, he has had knowledge 'communicated to him, by a supernatural afflatus, that wonderous art, as yet unknown in the plains of Albion, of turning up the soil with a share of iron, and scattering it with a small quantity of those grains which are most useful to man' (p.213-4). This

⁷⁴ There is of course no evidence that Milton even attended the performance of *A Mask*, much less wrote it in Ludlow. Despite this, citizens of the town will still happily point out to literary tourists the house where Milton wrote his masque.

⁷⁵ Pamela Clemit, 'A Pastoral Romance, from the Ancient British: Godwin's Rewriting of Comus', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 3.3 (1991), 217–39 (pp. 217–18). The article, with minor revisions, forms the first chapter of her book *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.13-34.

⁷⁶ The villainous Roderic is a fair reflection of the opinion of aristocracy Godwin expresses in his philosophical writing: see William Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin, Volume 3: An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. by Mark Philp (London: William Pickering, 1993), pp. 250-65 and the helpful summation in Marshal, *Godwin*, p.105.

supernatural knowledge of agriculture enables him to look out over a valley of farms and granges that acknowledge him as their lord. Nor is his mansion unworthy of this status: Roderic's mother, Rodigune, has surrounded it with an enchanted garden, which Godwin describes as an artfully managed wilderness of the kind that Capability Brown would surely have approved. His house is modelled in a prescient idea of the Palladian style and 'surrounded by pillars of the Ionic order' (p.257). He even has a classical education, despite being a pre-classical character—his apartments are hung with tapestries depicting scenes from Greek and Roman literature which have been 'miraculously communicated to Roderic' (p.224), presumably by the same means as his knowledge of agriculture.

In *Pamela*, however, the heroine is reconciled to her would-be seducer when her irreproachable virtue inspires his reformation, and his offer of marriage allows her to reach an accommodation with the existing social order by ascending into the gentry. No such opportunity to reform is given to Roderic, a despicable character who finds something 'noble, royal and independent' (p.208) in the thought of raping Imogen, and is only restrained from doing so by supernatural interference. He tries several ways to seduce Imogen. Like Rolli's Comapses he impersonates her established lover, Edwin, and like Dalton's Comus, he tempts her with a great feast and spectacle including songs in her praise. The songs are one of the most effectual techniques that Roderic uses, as they have a profound effect on Imogen.

her reverence for song was radical and deep. It had been instilled into her from earliest infancy; from earliest infancy she had considered poetry as the vehicle of divine and eternal truth. How strange and tremendous an advantage must he gain over the ear of simplicity, who can present his fascinations under the garb of all that is sacred and honourable? (p.228)

Godwin's account of these songs is rendered in prose, a decision that gestures towards the novel's framing as a translation, but which also helps his audience to avoid Imogen's mistake by discerning the dubious morality which would have been embodied in the lyrics, and made attractive by the music. This accords with the ideology that would later guide his works for

the stage. David O'Shaughnessy has argued that while Godwin greatly appreciated the theatre as a vehicle for instructing his audience, this operated in tension with the philosophical principles he laid down in *Political Justice*, that would call for the theatre's abolition once a certain stage of human perfectibility had been reached. This led him, in his plays, to shun crowd-pleasing set-pieces for long scenes of dialogue, a decision that contributed to their ill-success. O'Shaughnessy concludes that, 'Like previous eighteenth-century commentators on the theatre, there was no room in Godwin's ideology for the distraction of spectacle.'⁷⁷ Though *Imogen* is filled with spectacular descriptions and set-pieces, Godwin makes sure their effect is diminished by our awareness of the immoral ends towards which Roderic is working.

Despite all that Roderic can do, Imogen resists him until the appearance of Edwin. Entering the mansion, the hero is shown into a luxurious feast and tempted with a cup of pleasure which, if drunk, will put him under the power of Roderic. This is a circumstance that closely follows the Lady's predicament in *A Mask*, and the song which accompanies Edwin's temptation has many parts which are directly lifted from *A Mask*. For example, Godwin's 'What has sleep to do with the secrecy and silence of the night?' is an obvious lift from Milton's 'What hath night to do with sleep?' (l.122). This section also provides the strongest evidence for Godwin's familiarity with *Comus*, since his description of how 'a sportive, malicious divinity sent among men a gaudy phantom, and empty bubble, and called the shadow Honour' (p.262) sounds suspiciously close to Dalton's original song, 'Fame's a echo, prattling double, / An empty, airy, glitt'ring bubble' (II, 248-9). The spectacle Roderic lays on, which Godwin possibly draws from the famous stage spectacle of *Comus*, comes close to overwhelming Edwin, who 'could not but be struck by the beauty of the nymphs, he could

⁷⁷ O'Shaughnessy, *Godwin and the Theatre*, p.98

not but be surprised with the profuseness of the entertainment, and the richness of the preparations' (p.263-4). He picks up the cup of vice and raises it halfway to his lips, but inspired by his memories of Imogen and by 'an irresistible impulse of goodness' dashes it down. In his combat with Roderic, he succeeds where the brothers of *A Mask* and *Comus* failed, seizing Roderic's wand and shattering it. Roderic's castle immediately vanishes.

The castle rocked over his head. Those caverns, which for revolving years had served to hide the iniquity and the cruelty of their possessor, disclosed their secret horrors. The whole stupendous pile seemed rushing to the ground. A flood of lightning streamed across the scene. A peal of thunder, deafening and tremendous, followed it. All was now vacancy. Not a trace of those costly scenes, and that magnificent architecture remained. The heaven over-canopied the head of Edwin. The clouds were dissipated. (p.264)

As several Godwinian critics have argued, the sudden ruin of this edifice recalls the revolutionary moment, bringing Roderic's anachronistic manor house tumbling down and restoring our heroes to their primitive equality. It is also, I think, an anti-theatrical moment, where the illusions and spectacle Roderic has been using to entice Imogen and Edwin collapse like a stage illusion, and the heroic characters whose primitive virtue and truthfulness has withstood deception, hypocrisy, and impersonation, are restored to one another in time for the happy ending. Where Dalton had exploited the potential of *Comus*'s character for stage spectacle at the expense of his sexual threat, Godwin frequently comments on the sordid purposes that underpin Roderic's extravagant displays, through the voices of both the narrator and Imogen.

Conclusion.

The writers who adapted *A Mask* faced a different set of challenges to those whose work was influenced by *Paradise Lost*. Where the cosmographic epic presented challenges of scale, adapting the masque involved transferring the incredibly specific setting and occasion of the original text into a viable new context. The ways in which Rolli, Dalton and Godwin

overcome this obstacle embody the opportunities which they saw in the text. By setting *Sabrina* in an Anglo-Italian hybrid past as a fictional precursor to *A Mask*, Rolli furthers his project of emphasizing the Italian influence upon Milton's poetry. Dalton uses the urban context of his adaptation to stage a version of the Wild Wood akin to, and later associated with, the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, where Milton's bestial rout are transformed into polished revellers, and Comus is portrayed as a far more festive and far less sinister character than his original. By contrast, Godwin chooses to foreground the strong moral message of *Imogen* by setting the novel in an imagined Welsh rural past where a virtuous, pagan, pastoral society is threatened by a dissipated aristocratic sorcerer. His text restores the didactic element of Milton's celebration of temperance, whilst also adding a newly equalitarian note in his scathing portrayal of the villainous Roderic and his celebration of primitive equality.

These are adaptations that not only seem to speak to their original, but to draw upon one another. The wholesale incorporation of Milton's verse into *Comus*, and the prologue's elaborate praise of Milton as a national poet, can be read as a response to Rolli's far less faithful adaptation, while Godwin's criticism of spectacle in *Imogen* can be read as an oblique comment on the way that Dalton's indulgence of Comus's glamour undermined the moral message of *A Mask*. As with Philips and Dyer, by remapping Milton's original text onto new territories, Rolli, Dalton and Godwin took Milton's masque in a new direction even while their writing acknowledged and celebrated its Miltonic origins.

Chapter 4: Devotional Sublime and Domestic Burlesque

The call to put women writers ‘on the map’, or to make them ‘part of the landscape’ of the eighteenth century has been a popular one of late, employing a geographical metaphor where landscape and map function as synonyms for our understanding of the literary canon or the critical consensus.¹ It is an appealingly non-hierarchical image, dispelling the notion of a new ascendancy rising at the expense of the previous standard-bearers of literature. Instead we are offered an unblinkered view of an eighteenth century where women writers lived and worked alongside their male counterparts. Two modern critical dissenters have offered useful correctives to this dominant metaphor. While laying out the methodology of her comprehensive work *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and their Poetry*, Paula Backscheider takes issue with the received view.

I could not force women into existing paradigms and systems from which they were excluded and whose values they continually questioned and still question. It was not enough to create a ‘landscape’ that somehow mapped women onto it, as if they were tourist sites.²

As her analysis goes on to show, there were a whole range of poetic genres in the eighteenth century that were female specific, and whose existence requires that we produce a new literary (or cartographical) paradigm, going back to the drawing board (or the theodolite) and

¹ See Roger Lonsdale (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.xli; Karina Williamson, ‘The Tenth Muse: Women Writers and the Poetry of Common Life’, in *Early Romantics: Perspectives in Poetry from Pope to Wordsworth* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 185; Paul Keen, ‘Bigger Maps: Redrawing the Intellectual Boundaries’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 77.4 (2014), 493–502.

² Paula R Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p.xxi and n. That the phrase ‘broadening the landscape’ reoccurs in her conclusion indicates how deeply rooted in academic writing the trope remains.

seeing women's writing in the period as a 'terra incognita' rather than as a few blank spots in an otherwise well-charted landscape.³

Meanwhile, Jacqueline Labbe shows a consciousness that the masculine ideal of the equal wide survey from a distinguished height by a detached observer has survived to become a staple of the critical vocabulary:

Because of the pervasiveness of prospect terminology in critical as well as everyday usage, my argument has necessarily been infiltrated by the very discourse I critique. The language of eminence and the continued cultural celebration of height over lowliness co-operate to produce a critical vocabulary reflective of its subject.⁴

Height, then as now, indicates authority, and all critics, if not necessarily all poets, aspire to the wide authority of the prospect view. The tendency among eighteenth-century women poets to prefer poems of miniaturist visual detail to the generalist sweep of their male contemporaries, as first noted by Stuart Curran, is no expression of their relative worth.⁵ One might as well say that Denham's *Cooper's Hill* is a greater poem than Gray's 'Ode on a Distant View of Eton College' because it was written from a higher elevation. Yet I am interested in how women poets sought to co-opt and transcend this limitation in search of an authoritative general vision, and my research across the following two chapters investigates how they presented their claims to this authority. In the tradition of the devotional sublime, I trace a form of verse developed and shaped by women themselves; in the domestic burlesque I examine how a verse tradition of low cultural standing can be co-opted to make an

³ Similarly, in her survey of labouring-class women's poetry, Donna Landry warns feminist scholars that 'to incorporate Yearsley's poems, or Mary Collier's *The Woman's Labour* or Mary Leapor's *Crumble-Hall* into any canon without simultaneously questioning and historicizing the hierarchal and exclusionary practices of canon formation would be to replicate these poets' experience of patronage as tokenization.' Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739—1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.22.

⁴ Jacqueline M Labbe, *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p.xxi.

⁵ Stuart Curran, 'Romantic Poetry: The I Altered', in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. by Anne Kostelanetz Mellor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 185–203.

authoritative point; and in my final chapter on the previously male-dominated form of the prospect poem, I investigate the visual and authorial strategies that Ann Yearsley and Charlotte Smith used to lay a claim to this privileged space.

Women in Space and Women's Spaces.

The speech by the male chauvinist parson in Lady Mary Chudleigh's 1701 poem *The Ladies Defence* is emblematic of the way in which spatial perceptions could be divided between men and women.

You cannot boast our Steadiness of Mind,
Nor is your Knowledge half so unconfin'd;
We can beyond the Bounds of Nature see,
And dare to Fathom vast Infinity.
Then soar aloft, and view the Worlds on high,
And all the inmost Mansions of the Sky:
Gaze on the wonders, on the Beauties there,
And talk with the bright Phantoms of the Air [...]
Nothing's too hard for our Almighty Sense,
But you, not blest with *Phæbus* influence,
Wither in Shades; with nauseous Dulness curst,
Born Fools, and by resembling Idiots Nurst.⁶

This charge is not answered directly by Melissa, Chudleigh's mouthpiece in this debate, as another speaker intervenes and requires rebutting. Melissa's assertion of the strength of female vision and the necessity of female education in the long speech at the poem's close—together with the over-the-top rhetoric the poet attributes to the parson—must be taken as an indirect rebuttal. Chudleigh's prose essays, however, indicate that her true opinion was something close to directly opposite to that of the clerical character she had constructed. In 'Of Knowledge: To the Ladies' she urges her audience to learn astronomy, asking them to consider 'how transportingly pleasant will it be to take a view of the Universe, of the vast

⁶ Mary Lee Chudleigh, *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*, ed. by Margaret J M Ezell (New York : Oxford University Press, 1993), ll.194-212.

extent of created Nature, the not-to-be numbered Emanations of exuberant goodness? To contemplate the Superior regions and their blest Inhabitants’?⁷ Similarly, in ‘Of Solitude’ she writes that ‘At Night ten thousand lovely Objects will entertain us, unnumber’d Orbs of Light roll over our Heads, and keep our Thoughts agreeably employed.’⁸ For Chudleigh it is only the negligent, careless or non-existent education of women that keeps them diverted by gossip and domestic issues, and prevents them from observing and appreciating their true place in the universe, to the betterment of their minds.

The debate over female education remained contested throughout the century, but even in the 1790s these same spatial divisions still lingered, now internalised within Hannah More’s conservative response in *Strictures of Female Education* (1799) to the emancipatory threat posed by Mary Wollstonecraft’s theories. More suggests that,

A woman sees the world, as it were, from a little elevation in her own garden, whence she takes an exact survey of home scenes, but takes not in that wider range of distant prospects, which he who stands on a loftier eminence commands.⁹

More’s distinction between male and female vision accords with Labbe’s discussion of the gendering of vision in *Romantic Visualities*, particularly her observation that ‘Achieving the eminence is a privilege of the male writer, an extension of the social privileges his gender brings him’, while ‘This traditional place of prominence is further complicated for the woman author who, in most cases barred by law from the rights of ownership, cannot easily ascend the hill and partake of this disinterested view.’¹⁰ This code restricts women’s poetry to the placially-bound, to a poetics based on detailed observation of the familiar locations of the house and garden and their immediate neighbourhood, rather than permitting an exploration

⁷ Chudleigh, *Poems and Prose*, p.259.

⁸ Chudleigh, *Poems and Prose*, p.387.

⁹ Hannah More, *Selected Writings of Hannah More*, ed. by Robert Hole (Brookfield, VT : Pickering & Chatto, 1996), p.181-2.

¹⁰ Jacqueline M Labbe, *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp.xii-xiii.

of the wider spaces either of the prospect view or of astronomical speculation on Chudleigh's terms. This perception of the limited scope of women's writing continued to be reinforced by male critics well into the nineteenth century. During its opening decades, one of the most respected women writers of the day, Anna Letitia Barbauld, published a poem that emulated the scope and authority of Thomson and his followers, stationing herself 'at a single fixed point, 1811, from which she can survey the broad expanse of society and time in all directions', an ability previously 'claimed by powerful men'.¹¹ For trespassing on this male preserve, she found herself at the receiving end of a critical excoriation from John Wilson Croker often compared to the infamous review of John Keats's *Endymion* he would pen six years later.¹² Croker's vivid caricature of Barbauld as an old maid impelled 'to dash down her shagreen spectacles and her knitting needles' and to rush out and set the world to rights, is an attempt to deny Barbauld authority by literally putting her back in her place: a woman's place, of course, is in the home.¹³

What means then were open for women writers who desired a larger scale, a greater canvas to write on? For many, the devotional injunction to 'stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God' (Job 37.14) provided a justification for female education and a way for them to expand the scope of their worldview; the pietistic frame, as it were, provided a license for them to step outside the domestic sphere. It was here that Milton's example could be an influential one.

¹¹ Maggie Favretti, 'Anna Barbauld and the Politics of Vision', in *Women's poetry in the enlightenment: the making of a canon 1730-1820*, ed. by Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p.100.

¹² Like the myth that the savage reviews of *Endymion* accelerated Keats's early demise, the academic myth that this review ended her writing career has been convincingly debunked by Devoney Looser in *Women Writers and Old Age in Great Britain, 1750-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

¹³ John Wilson Croker, 'Review of Anna Letitia Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven. A Poem*' in *The Quarterly Review*, 7, (June 1812) 309-33.

Milton himself was once held to be a patriarchal and misogynist writer whose influence was universally oppressive to women writers. Borrowing a phrase from Virginia Woolf for her 1978 essay 'Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton's Bogey', Sandra M. Gilbert wrote that 'Milton's bogey cuts women off from the spaciousness of possibility, from the predominantly male landscapes of fulfilment' and thus initiated some of the fullest and frankest exchanges of views in the contested history of Milton Studies.¹⁴ The 'women question' remains a live issue, but the terms of the argument were forever changed with the publication of Joseph Wittreich's *Feminist Milton* which attempted to restore Milton to his original radical context and show that for many women readers and writers, his works had not been oppressive but rather a liberating influence.¹⁵ Though his work has since been critiqued and revised to reveal a rather less optimistic picture than Wittreich's original assessment made out, it has never again been possible to see Milton as quite so monolithically obstructive, as relentlessly misogynistic, as he appeared in Gilbert's essay.¹⁶ Indeed modern criticism has striven to see Milton's writing as part of an ongoing discourse which includes seventeenth-century women poets like Aemilia Lanyer and Rachel Speght and continues into the works of Lady Mary Chudleigh. A recent essay by Leah S. Marcus dismisses 'the "Milton bogey" of a generation ago' in favour of recent ecocriticism that sees Eve as a 'proto-ecologist' and Milton 'as a precursor of modern

¹⁴ Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton's Bogey', *PMLA*, 93 (1978), 368–82 (p.368). See also the critical exchange in the following issue: Philip J. Gallagher and Sandra M. Gilbert (rejoinder), 'Milton's Bogey', *PMLA*, 94 (1979), 319–22 and the three articles in *Critical Inquiry*: Christine Froula, 'When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy', *Critical Inquiry*, 10.2 (1983), 321–47; Edward Pechter, 'When Pechter Reads Froula Pretending She's Eve Reading Milton', *Critical Inquiry*, 11.1 (1984), 163–70; Christine Froula, 'Pechter's Specter: Milton's Bogey Writ Small', *Critical Inquiry*, 11.1 (1984), 171–78.

¹⁵ Wittreich, *Feminist Milton*.

¹⁶ See John Leonard's chapter 'Sex and the Sexes' in *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of Paradise Lost, 1667-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), particularly pp.650-69.

environmentalism.’¹⁷ In the New Milton Criticism, which preserves Milton’s ambiguities as an indispensable part of his poetic discourse rather than attempting to solve them, Milton is no longer thought of as claustrophobic or forbidding but as an enabler of new ideas and creative spaces.

Milton’s self-presentation at the time of *Paradise Lost*, as recounted in the opening verse paragraphs of Books III, VII and IX, was of a man blind and ‘fall’n on evil days’ (*PL* VII. 25), exiled from the public sphere of a morally dubious Restoration Britain and confined to a domestic life. ‘Yet not the more / Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt / Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill’ (*PL* III. 26-8) he writes, establishing his ability to write from retirement and comparing himself to the nightingale, ‘the wakeful bird / [that] Sings darkling and in shadiest covert hid / Tunes her nocturnal note’ (*PL* III. 38-40). This image of the poet singing from retirement would be drawn upon by the devotional poet Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737), one of whose poetic pseudonyms was ‘Philomela’, and who spent a large portion of her publishing career interacting with the London publishing world from her provincial home in Frome, Somerset.¹⁸ I argue that Milton’s writing provided a model for women writers reaching towards what I here term the devotional sublime, or a way of surveying God’s works from retirement without having to invoke the panoptic prospect with its connotations of hierarchy and land-ownership. Whereas a large body of eighteenth-century women’s writing reacted to the male monopolisation of Milton’s sublime spaces by turning to Eden to examine Eve’s role in the epic and the sexual politics of her relationship with Adam, other authors chose to follow in Milton’s tracks and rise from the domestic

¹⁷ Leah Marcus, ‘Ecocriticism and Vitalism in *Paradise Lost*’, *Milton Quarterly*, 49.2 (2015), 96–111 (p. 96). See also Shannon Miller, ‘Disruptive Partners: Milton and Seventeenth-Century Women Writers’, in *New Milton Criticism*, ed. by Peter C. Herman and Elizabeth Sauer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 156–74.

¹⁸ Philomela was the daughter of Tereus who was transformed into a nightingale.

sphere to consider the cosmos.¹⁹ Some critics have described this venturesomeness as Satanic, drawing on readings of *Paradise Lost* that characterise Satan's part as a rebellion against an unjust Patriarchal God. Sceptical of the validity of this reading amongst the devotional poets of the eighteenth century, I see their co-opting of poetic flight as an attempt to draw upon the poetic authority of one of the most well-known and best revered of English poets.

Also relevant to the discussion ahead is the distinction between place and space, which in Milton was largely divided between the human place of the garden of Eden and the vast spatial realm of Chaos and the stellar universe.²⁰ I had originally intended the chapter to discuss how women in patriarchally-ordained places managed to write the poetry of astronomical space, but the concepts of space and place will not be reduced to this simple dichotomy. In the cosmos of Elizabeth Singer Rowe, for example, a religious poet with no astronomical background, we see the remnants of the old view of the universe as 'a cosmos fitted, by over a millennium of cosmographic and hexameral literature, to earthly concerns and a sense of place that was earthly by definition.'²¹ Rowe's wandering spirit is entirely at home within this placial realm, wherein she ascends through the stars to encounter God in Heaven. By contrast, the bluestocking poet and amateur astronomer Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806) depicts a vividly Newtonian universe of absolute space, where God is 'everywhere present in the infinite physical universe—and thus indissociable from this universe, penetrating it all the way through at every level.'²² In this scheme where the Earth has been removed from both physical and spiritual centrality in space, place is an entirely relative

¹⁹ A useful encapsulation of the Eve tradition is available in Leslie E Moore, *Beautiful Sublime: The Making of Paradise Lost, 1701-1734* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp.57-97.

²⁰ See Gillies, 'Space and Place in *Paradise Lost*'; Mark J Bruhn, 'Place Deixis and the Schematics of Imagined Space: Milton to Keats', *Poetics Today*, 26.3 (2005), 387-432; Brady.

²¹ John Gillies, 'Space and Place in *Paradise Lost*', p.28.

²² Edward S Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p.148.

phenomenon contained and swallowed up within space. Finally the Unitarian writer Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825) mediates between the two, mixing a placial description of the stars and planets with passages that both evoke and critique the sublimity of unbounded space.

The Devotional Sublime from Rowe to Barbauld

One of the great religious writers of the early eighteenth century, Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737) hailed from a dissenting family in Frome, Somersetshire, on the eastern side of the Mendip Hills. She first came to literary fame in the 1690s through her contributions to *The Athenian Mercury*, a forerunner of the great literary magazines of the era. The editor, John Dunton was only too happy to publish her religious verse, pastorals and panegyrics on William III, providing his anonymous contributor with a variety of pseudonyms such as the ‘Pindarick Lady’ (after one of her favourite verse forms, the culturally prestigious Pindaric Ode) and ‘Philomela.’ She later became part of a group of coterie writers surrounding the Countess of Hertford, frequently exchanging letters and poems with one another.

Wider success came with the anonymous publication of *Friendship in Death: In Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living*. The devotional message of the book, together with Rowe’s post-mortem reinvention as ‘The pious Mrs. Rowe’, an exemplary Christian writer, has overshadowed until recently the variety, strangeness and far-reaching influence of Rowe’s *sui generis* fiction.²³ One epistle even pioneers an early form of science fiction when a departed spirit furnishes his stargazing mortal friend with an account of a new planet ‘in a region immense spaces distant from that system which is enlightened by your Sun, and

²³ For Rowe’s generic innovations see Paula R Backscheider, *Elizabeth Singer Rowe and the Development of the English Novel* (Baltimore, MA: John Hopkins Press, 2013); and Melanie Bigold, *Women of Letters, Manuscript Circulation and Print Afterlives in the Eighteenth Century: Elizabeth Rowe, Catharine Cockburn and Elizabeth Carter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

created numberless Ages before the Foundations of the Earth were laid.’²⁴ The unfallen inhabitants of this planet possess the Orphic ability to reshape their surroundings through musical harmony, and while their immortal nature prevents them from ascending to Heaven, ‘they are exempt from all Evil, blest to the Height of their Faculties and Conceptions and [...] their residence may properly be called the enchanted world.’²⁵ This interest in the theology of other habitable planets has both a considerable pedigree and a long afterlife. Milton adventurously left the possibility of extra-terrestrial life open; Satan in his travels passes planets ‘Like those Hesperian gardens famed of old, / Fortunate fields, and groves and flow’ry vales, / Thrice happy isles, but who dwelt happy there / He stayed not to inquire’ (*PL* III. 568-71), while among Raphael’s doubtful answers to Adam’s curiosity about the celestial mechanics of the universe is the admission that the universe is ‘stored in each orb perhaps with some that live’ (*PL* VII. 152). This was theologically tricky ground, raising the obvious questions about the Fall and the Incarnation. Would the inhabitants of other planets have fallen when Adam fell, and been redeemed by the Son? Would they, as Rowe speculates, have remained unfallen? Or would an entirely different theology have applied?²⁶

This is not the only point where Rowe’s work draws upon Milton’s. Indeed, I would argue that her work inhabits a devotional universe that can only be described as Miltonic, and she may rival John Philips for the position of the first serious Miltonic poem following Milton’s death. Her poem ‘The beginning of the fourth Book of Tasso’s Jerusalem translated’ is unmistakably Miltonic in spite of the twin barriers of translation and Rowe’s use of the

²⁴ Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Friendship in Death*. In *Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living* (London, 1728) pp.26-7 Cf. Paula R Backscheider, *Elizabeth Singer Rowe and the Development of the English Novel* (Baltimore, MA: John Hopkins Press, 2013) pp.101-3 who reads this epistle in the context of the French fairy tale.

²⁵ Rowe, *Friendship in Death*, p.28.

²⁶ In this regard, Rowe’s epistle anticipates C.S. Lewis’s science-fiction novels *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) and *Perelandra* (1943), which take place on Mars and Venus respectively and investigate how Christian theology would operate on a planet which had not experienced the Edenic Fall as Milton recounts it.

heroic couplet, particularly when Lucifer addresses his fellow devils as ‘Infernal gods, worthy the thrones of light / And monarchies of heav’n’, and demands ‘Have you forgot when in bright arms we shone/ Engaged with heav’n and shook his lofty throne?’²⁷ Her poem ‘A Pastoral on the Nativity of our Saviour’ echoes the language of Milton’s nativity ode, while the angel’s awe at witnessing in his mortal form ‘th’ineffable divinity / Who armed with Thunder, on the Fields of Light / O’ercame the potent Seraphims in fight’ (p.42) refers specifically to the account of the War in Heaven contained in *Paradise Lost*. Finally, despite its choice of heroic couplets, her heroic poem *The History of Joseph* (1736; 1737) is indebted for its structure to Milton’s epic machinery, particularly the council in Hell.

Her most critically discussed work is the poem where this Miltonic element is at its most evident, ‘A description of Hell. In imitation of Milton’, which first appeared in the 1704 miscellany *Divine Hymns and Poems on Several Occasions*. In her book *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture*, Sarah Prescott explores Rowe’s role in the creation of a distinctive and influential Whig poetic, arguing for the influence of John Dennis, an early Milton critic and theorist of the sublime, in the writing of ‘A description of Hell’ which emphasizes ‘the terror, and, therefore, the repentance, that religious verse, properly managed, can inspire’, a reading of the poem that concentrates on its affective impact on its eighteenth-century audiences.²⁸

Sharon Achinstein argues that Rowe thought Milton could provide a powerful voice both for Whigs and dissenters, but also that he had a particular status in her poetics as ‘a Milton of extreme states, a poet of darkness and loss, as well as a moral centre in an

²⁷ Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *The Miscellaneous Works, in Prose and Verse, of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe*, ed. by Theophilus Rowe (London, 1739), Vol 1, pp.5-6. All further references to Rowe’s poetry are to this edition unless otherwise stated.

²⁸ Sarah Prescott, *Women, Authorship, and Literary Culture, 1690-1740* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 161.

irreligious age.’²⁹ Her close reading of the ‘Description of Hell’ uncovers a key difference between the aesthetics of Milton and Rowe in her opposition of Milton’s internal and external Hell, fraught with paradoxical language like ‘darkness visible’ and refracted through the viewpoint of Satan, with Rowe’s confidence in the perspicuity of her inspired vision of a Hell whose torments are less physical than psychological.

Dustin D. Stewart, meanwhile, focuses on Rowe’s favourite poetic figure of the heaven-bound soul, freed from its bodily confinement, in contrast with the pained stasis of the hell-bound soul. His juxtaposition of the ‘Description of Hell’ with ‘On Heaven’ lends depth to his analysis, but his reasons for treating it as a companion poem are left implicit.³⁰ I will argue in my analysis for reading both poems together as evidence of Rowe’s individual reinterpretation of Milton’s spatial poetics.

Discussion continues as to the editorial status of much of Rowe’s poetry. Critics such as Marlene R. Hansen and Paula Backscheider have scrutinised the decisions of Rowe’s various male editors, such as John Dunton, Edward Curll and her brother Theophilus Rowe, and found evidence that all these editors reshaped her published works to their own ends, rendering her textual canon corrupt and problematizing any attempt to produce a *Collected Poems*.³¹ In her extensive work with the manuscripts of Rowe and other coterie writers, however, Melanie Bigold rehabilitates the maligned figure of the eighteenth-century editors such as Theophilus Rowe, finding ‘in their editions a recreation of the, admittedly, nebulous

²⁹ Sharon Achinstein, “‘Pleasure by Description’: Elizabeth Singer Rowe’s Enlightened Milton”, in *Milton and the Grounds of Contention*, ed. by Mark R Kelley, Michael Lieb, and John T Shawcross (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003), p.71.

³⁰ Dustin D Stewart, ‘Elizabeth Rowe, John Milton and Poetic Change’, *Women’s Writing*, 20.1 (2013), 13–31.

³¹ Marlene R Hansen, ‘The Pious Mrs. Rowe’, *English Studies*, 76 (1995), 34–51; Backscheider, *Women Poets*, p.114-5.

textual realities of these women's epistolary careers.'³² Examining the texts of 'A Description of Hell' and 'On Heaven' in the two editions where they appeared, the *Divine Poems* of 1704 and the *Miscellaneous Works* of 1739, I find no substantive variants beyond the addition of 'And' to the start of a line, where the meter clearly required its presence. Their pairing together in both of these verse collections, one during Rowe's lifetime, suggests they are representative of Rowe's authorial intention, and therefore I have chosen to quote from the superior text of the *Miscellaneous Works*.

'A Description of Hell' begins,

Deep, to unfathomable spaces deep,
Descend the dark, detested paths of hell,
The gulphs of execration and despair,
Of pain, and rage, and pure unmingled woe[.]³³

Like the famous opening to Book I of *Paradise Lost*, 'Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit', which elides the diphthong in 'disobedience', Rowe's opening line rebels against the laws of Milton's versification, placing a strong accent on the first syllable, 'deep', and requiring the word 'to' to be sounded as a weak syllable, rather than eliding it with the opening vowel of 'unfathomable' as 't'unfathomable.' This announces her poetic independence, even in a poem that admits its imitative status in its title. In a striking imitation of the Miltonic rhetorical figure of epanalepsis, or the repetition of words at the beginning and end of the metrical line, the repeated use of 'deep' establishes the poem's sense of horizontal claustrophobia even as it evokes the dizzying vertical prospect of the descent into Hell. Rowe's blank verse lines abandon Milton's dynamic enjambment, as the bulk of eighteenth-century blank verse would, but here the end-stopped line proves representative of

³²Melanie Bigold, *Women of Letters, Manuscript Circulation and Print Afterlives in the Eighteenth Century: Elizabeth Rowe, Catharine Cockburn and Elizabeth Carter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.15

³³ Elizabeth Rowe, 'A description on Hell' in *The Miscellaneous Works, in Prose and Verse* ed. Theophilus Rowe (London: 1737), p.49-52; ll.1-4. All further references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the body of the text.

the sterility of Rowe's hell. The demons in Milton's Hell undergo the torment of being chained to the lake of fire and the humiliation of being transformed into snakes, but are meanwhile free to move freely, to converse and even to shape and change their surroundings. As John Gillies points out, Hell 'while proving extremely unpleasant for its new occupants, does permit them an important level of counter-agency. Accordingly they seek to mediate the effects of place, to disempower, relativize, nullify, and escape it.'³⁴ By contrast, Rowe's damned souls suffer eternal punishment void even of the (dubiously) heroic endeavour that animates Milton's fallen angels.

Part of that dubious heroism in *Paradise Lost* was the fallen angels' attempt to construct a place at least reminiscent of the comforts of Heaven in a space drastically inhospitable to any such endeavour – a discourse which, as J. Martin Evans informs us, draws upon the language of seventeenth-century English imperialism.³⁵ As the great palace of Pandaemonium arises upon the dismal plain of fire and the angelic troops rally after the shock of their defeat and fall, Satan's boast that, 'The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n' (*PL* I. 254-5), might seem partly justified. This illusion of heroism, of course, is a boast which comes undone in Book IV when he discovers 'Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell; / And in the lowest deep a lower deep / Still threatening to devour me opens wide' (*PL* IV. 75-7). Rowe's Hell lacks this imperial dimension or deceptive glory; in her poem little distinction is drawn between the desolation of the external and the internal landscapes. The 'fiery ocean's stormy rage' (16) and the 'Inevitable snares, and fatal pits / And gulphs of deep perdition' (19-20) are not here the chief torment but merely a kind of mood music, a projection of the inner suffering of the 'pale,

³⁴ John Gillies, 'Space and Place in *Paradise Lost*', *ELH*, 74 (2007), 27–57, (p.47).

³⁵ Evans.

meagre spectres [...] And pensive shades, and black deformed ghosts' (26-7) onto the external surroundings.

In the catalogue of damned archetypes which Rowe runs through, the punishments decreed are not the inventive classical examples of Tantalus and Sisyphus, nor immersion in a boiling lake, like the fallen angels, but confrontation with the error of their ways. In her poem, the Atheist is confronted with irrefragable proof of God's existence; the Libertine with the Paradise lost by his pursuit of earthly pleasures; the 'wanton beauty' (48) with the damned souls of all she seduced from the paths of virtue; the Miser sees his heir recklessly spending all his gold; and the religious zealot (Rowe's particular abhorrence) views 'the schismatic / The visionary, the deluded saint / By him so often hated, wronged and scorned' (76-7) in possession of the Heaven which he had lost. The Miltonic horror of the surrounding scenes, the 'Prodigious darkness! which receives no light, / But from the sickly blaze of sulph'rous flames' (7-8) is merely a reflection of their interior desolation, which in the case of the Miser, the Libertine and the Zealot is a vertical exclusion. They are gazing hopelessly upward from a place barren of everything but their interior suffering toward a Heaven where existence still retains its meaning.

The opening of 'On Heaven' seems initially similar in its rhetorical patterning, but it opens with an entirely different set of poetic conventions.

What glorious things of thee, O glorious Place
Shall my bold Muse in daring Numbers speak?
While to Immortal strains I tune my lyre,
And warbling imitate angelic airs:
While ecstasy bears up my soul aloft,
And lively faith gives me a distant glimpse
Of glories unreveal'd to humane Eyes.³⁶

³⁶ Elizabeth Rowe, 'On Heaven' in *The Miscellaneous Works*, p.52-5, ll.1-7. All further references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the body of the text.

As in the 'Description of Hell' repetition is present in the opening line, but to a very different effect; while the repetition of 'deep' conveyed both depth and claustrophobia, the repetition of 'glorious' here connotes overflow, prefiguring the inability of superlatives to encapsulate the sublime nature of many of Rowe's subjects. Whereas the 'Description of Hell' had suppressed any distinct authorial voice in order to focus more severely upon the horror and torments of the infernal regions, this poem begins with the assertion of a confident poetic voice calling upon the lyre, the muse, and all the familiar trappings of the inspired poet. Here, Rowe lays claim to Milton's specifically gendered image of 'the poet soaring in the high reason of his fancies, with his garland and singing robes about him' presenting herself as a woman equally capable of inspired poetic flight.³⁷

Outer space detains her a surprisingly short time, and she passes on to the throne of God after three lines of salutation: 'Ye starry mansions, hail! my native skies! / Here in my happy, pre-existent state, / A spotless mind, I led the life of gods' (8-10). She here expresses the unusual and heterodox notion of the soul's pre-existence in these realms, a touch which reveals Rowe's continuing allegiance to the idea of a universe of place. To the enlightened soul, even the apparent void between worlds, the absolute space of Newton, is a known and familiar place which she recalls from before her earthly incarnation. As Dustin Stewart has noted, her assertions of the soul's immortality and of its pre-existence in some order of Heaven also 'protects her singing soul and her poetry from the charge of interloping' and provides her with a direct passport to the City of Heaven and from thence to the throne of God himself.³⁸ Rowe reverses the Dantean sequence of slow and measured approach to the divinity, presenting us almost immediately with a God who, quite naturally, defies

³⁷ John Milton, *Reason of Church Government* in *CPW*, vol. 1, p.808.

³⁸ Dustin D Stewart, 'Elizabeth Rowe, John Milton and Poetic Change', *Women's Writing*, 20 (2013), 13-31, (p.23).

description. Rowe lays emphasis instead upon his perfect bliss, and the social aspect of that love which moved him both to create the universe and to communicate his bliss throughout that realm. The inexpressibility of God's nature allows Rowe to turn to the angels surrounding him as mediators, who can describe the raptures of viewing God unveiled. Here Rowe's dominant metaphor of liquidity becomes pronounced: the sight of God causes 'impetuous floods of Joy' (38) to rise within angelic breasts, even as God's presence is itself a font of liquid beneficence in which the angels bathe.

When from the bright unclouded face of God
 You drink full draughts of bliss and endless love,
 And plunge yourselves in Life's immortal fount
 The spring of joy which from his darling throne
 In endless currents smoothly glides away,
 Through all the verdant fields of Paradise,
 Through balmy groves, where on their flow'ry banks
 To murmuring waters, and soft whisp'ring winds
 Fair spirits in melodious consort join
 And sweetly warble their heroic loves [...] (41-50)

The countryside is always a place of virtue and retirement in Rowe's poetry and epistolary fiction, and the merger in these lines between the extended emotional metaphor of 'flowing joys' and the actual physical attributes of springs, fountains, rivers and currents, contrive to sweep the reader out into the countryside before they are quite aware that they have left the city of Heaven behind.³⁹ Rowe's construction disturbs the polarised notions, common throughout the eighteenth century, of city and countryside as realms of artifice and nature respectively: simplicity and virtue compared with luxury and vice. As Addison wrote, 'In Courts and Cities we are entertained with the Works of Men, in the Country with those of

³⁹ See Backscheider, *Elizabeth Singer Rowe and the Development of the English Novel*, pp.97-99; and John J Richetti, 'Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe: The Novel as Polemic', *PMLA*, 82.7 (1967), 522-29 (pp. 524-25). The conclusion Richetti draws from *Friendship in Death*, that 'Heaven is not seen as a great urban cluster of the Just; the celestial city, the New Jerusalem, has been exchanged for polemical purposes for the pastoral seats of glory' (p.524) does not appear true of this poem, which combines both characterisations.

God.⁴⁰ How can these juxtapositions apply when the city is the New Jerusalem, the throne and seat of God, and the countryside of Heaven is beyond His glory? Milton is no help here for the poet, for his Heaven only looks like a fortified palace or castle from the outside, when Satan looks upwards towards its borders. The landscape within is entirely pastoral, to the extent that God is accorded a mound rather than a formal structure in which to dwell.

In 'On Heaven', Rowe solves this dilemma by retaining the image of the countryside as a place of retirement, but rehabilitating the city as the residence of God. The souls that retire to the countryside are not escaping the vice and corruption of urban life, but seeking respite from the dazzling splendour of God in His glory. This reversal of moral polarities is figured in the reversal of the river's course: unlike earthly rivers, it rises within the city and then flows out to the countryside. The horizontal arrangement of place in Heaven contrasts with the verticality of Rowe's Hell and the impassable space dividing it from Heaven. There remains a division between the dazzling presence of God in the city and the shaded withdrawal of the countryside, but Rowe's verse elides the boundary between them, eliminating the walls and gates of the city, as well as the need for horses, coaches, footmen, country inns and all the apparatus of the English road system.

The countryside of Heaven is a place of 'balmy groves', 'flow'ry banks', 'murm'ring waters and soft whisp'ring winds' (47-8). Eminently pastoral in its vision, it is a place well suited to Rowe's eroticised conception of the afterlife. When the 'Fair Spirits in melodious consort join' to 'warble their heroic loves' (49-50), the making of music swiftly gives way to an image of sexual union more explicit even than Milton's 'union of pure with pure' as 'Their spotless minds all pure and exquisite, / The noblest heights of love prepar'd to act, / In everlasting sympathies unite, / And melt, in flowing joys, eternity away' (55-60). The

⁴⁰ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) No.465, IV.143-4.

recurring image of ‘flowing joys’ throws us back to the ‘spring of joy’ that pours from God’s throne. In Rowe’s Heaven, boundaries that are clearly defined in the mortal world, the boundaries between the urban and the rural, the lover and the self, become liquid and permeable. Where the sinners in Hell have no recourse from the bleakness of their interior torment, the heavenly souls are united in God and able to dissolve themselves in a union that surpasses anything the physical world has to offer.

The poem concludes with an angelic hymn of praise, where ‘melting’ voices join ‘In Strains expresless [sic] by a Mortal Tongue’ (85). Rowe is only able to describe the beauty of this song through its Orphean effects on the landscape, as the trees bloom out afresh and the streams pause in their courses to attend the melody. In comparison, Milton in Book III chooses to incorporate the angel’s hymn to God within his poem, in a passage which moves with subtlety from a clear paraphrase like ‘Thee Father first they sung Omnipotent’ (*PL* III. 372), to a point where it is no longer clear whether it is Milton or the angels we are hearing in the final apostrophe beginning, ‘Hail Son of God, Saviour of Men, thy Name / Shall be the copious matter of my Song / Henceforth’ (*PL* III. 412-14). By contrast Rowe reasserts her inspired vision by acknowledging the inadequacy of language to convey it, rather than blending her voice with the song of the angels. It is another reminder that the poet is not yet ready to become one of the happy spirits that dwell in Heaven. Though this ‘transporting place’ (86) has superseded her previous residence, the poem finds her immediately making a withdrawal from the scenes she describes, as she ‘turn[s] my loathing Eyes / To yonder Earthly Globe, my dusky seat’ (88). Heaven is the reward for her earthly labours; she may visit in vision, but she cannot abide there until her time on Earth is done.

Adapting Milton’s language and description to her devotional universe, Rowe suppresses the vast uninhabited spaces of Chaos and gives us instead a universe where the sinners and the righteous are in their designated places and even the void between the stars is

not an empty space but a place which the soul will recall with familiarity after leaving its mortal prison. Yet in spite of this willingness to take us on poetic flights into the superlunary realms, none of Rowe's poems reveal any of the vocabulary or the technical knowledge of astronomy. Her friend and fellow-dissenter, the influential hymn composer and devotional writer Isaac Watts would publish a textbook of geographical and astronomical exercises, *The Knowledge of the Heavens and the Earth* in which he claimed that nothing 'has contributed to enlarge my Apprehensions of the immense Power of God, the Magnificence of his Creation, and his own transcendent Grandeur, so much as that little Portion of Astronomy which I have been able to attain.'⁴¹ Astronomy here is valued as a devotional exercise as well as a science, and Elizabeth Singer Rowe's approach to it contains more of the former than the latter. She admits as much in a letter to the Reverend Thomas Amory.

I have been reading all this morning of the sun, stars and comets; but I can't be so vain to tell you I understood perfectly one line that I read: Yet the subject has given a sort of elevation to my thoughts, and put them in [...] a kind of dazzling confusion [...]⁴²

The experience she relates with this astronomical textbook (possibly Watt's own) is consistent with the rest of her poetry and prose. Her explorations of the heavens are imaginative rather than scientific, and while she writes of other planets, she never mentions a constellation by name.

Among the next generation of writers, Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806) stands out as a contrasting figure. One of Rowe's admirers and the writer of perhaps the most accomplished of the verse elegies on Rowe's death, the multi-talented Carter was a capable astronomer as well as a poet and translator fluent in numerous ancient and modern languages. Astronomy

⁴¹ Isaac Watts, *The Knowledge of the Heavens and the Earth Made Easy: Or, The First Principles of Astronomy and Geography* (London, 1760), p.ix [First edition 1726].

⁴² Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *The Miscellaneous Works, in Prose and Verse, of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe*, ed. by Theophilus Rowe (London, 1749), Vol 2, pp.230-1.

was becoming a popular accomplishment for women, and with the triumph of the Copernican theory of the heavens had come a rash of popular astronomy books that usually took the didactic form of a dialogue between an experienced astronomer and a young aristocratic lady. M. de Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* was first translated into English a year after its publication in 1687, and went through numerous subsequent editions and translations well into the mid-eighteenth century. In Britain, meanwhile, the science-writer John Harris sought to supplement his more technical works such as *The Description and Uses of the Celestial and Terrestrial Globes* (1702) with the more accessible *Astronomical Dialogues* (1719) modelled after Fontenelle. Harris allows his pupil to declare, 'I have a mind to be an Astronomer, as well as the best of them; and I don't design, Sir, that my studies shall spoil my Housewifry.'⁴³ An interest in the stars, it is clear, could sit alongside the other 'accomplishments' of young marriageable women, especially as it required little mathematical expertise whilst providing a wealth of knowledge relevant to other cultural spheres. *Astronomical Dialogues* contains few mathematical problems until its later pages, but there is frequent quotation throughout from Butler's *Hudibras*, Dryden's translations of the classics, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.⁴⁴

Elizabeth Carter made her own contribution to the development of this early popular science literature with her 1739 translation of Francisco Algarotti's *Il Newtonianesimo per le dame* as *Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy explained for the use of the Ladies*, which includes Algarotti's original letter of dedication to Fontenelle. In her youth, she was clearly a keen astronomer: one of her juvenile letters in Montagu Pennington's *Memoirs* finds her assuring her confidant 'I am not so much devoted to these earthly entertainments of assemblies, &c.

⁴³ John Harris, *Astronomical Dialogues between a Gentleman and a Lady* (London, 1719), p.60.

⁴⁴ The Lady's citation of 'that blind Creature Milton' (p.119) indicates that Milton's works had already reached a wide circulation, but his reputation was still in bad odour among respectable royalists.

but that I still retain a very great regard to the stars. Does not Venus make a fine appearance? You cannot think how I long for a telescope.’⁴⁵ A letter written in March 1742, when she was twenty-four, finds her complaining ‘Is it not a most mortifying Circumstance for us stargazing people not to get a Sight of the Comet?’⁴⁶ She was introduced to the astronomer Thomas Wright in 1738, and he would introduce her in turn to her lifelong friend and correspondent, Catherine Talbot.

Not long after Talbot and Carter met, she wrote an untitled astronomical poem that appears in her *Poems on Various Occasions*.

While clear the night, and ev’ry thought serene,
Let Fancy wander o’er the solemn scene:
And, wing’d by active Contemplation, rise
Amidst the radiant wonders of the skies.⁴⁷

Rowe had not specified the place from whence her flight ascended, other than its situation on the dull earth. Carter begins her own flight amid a still and contemplative night-time scene that recalls Anne Finch’s *A Nocturnal Reverie*, a popular and influential work among women poets.⁴⁸ Where Finch’s night piece is entirely pastoral, however, Carter casts her eyes upwards and recognises the constellation of Cassiopeia before raising her eyes northwards towards Corona Borealis and Ursa Major, and dropping them again to take in the sweep of the Milky Way,

Where every star that gilds the gloom of night
With the faint tremblings of a distant light,
Perhaps illumines some system of its own
With the strong influence of a radiant sun. (p.27)

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Carter, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter: With a New Edition of Her Poems, Including Some Which Have Never Appeared before*, ed. by Montagu Pennington (London: Printed for F.C. and J. Rivington, 1808), Vol. 1 p.26.

⁴⁶ Gwen Hampshire, ed. *Elizabeth Carter, 1717-1806: An Edition of Some Unpublished Letters*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p.124.

⁴⁷ Carter, *Poems on Several Occasions* in *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter: With a New Edition of Her Poems, Including Some Which Have Never Appeared before* Vol.2, p.26. Hereafter references to this poem will be given parenthetically.

⁴⁸ See Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre*, pp.239-40 and *passim*.

Carter's appreciation of the heavens is not limited to the merely visual. Her knowledge of astronomy allows her to make the leap between observation and theorising, powerfully expressed in the juxtaposition between the faint tremblings and the strong radiance of the same star seen at different proximities. A similar mixing of perspectives is seen when she moves on to Saturn, which until the discovery of Uranus by William Herschel in 1781 was considered the final planet in the solar system. Earth's 'gay climates', comfortably in the middle of what astronomers now call the Goldilocks Zone, are contrasted with the faint light cast on Saturn, where the sun 'glimmers from afar, / With the pale lustre of a twinkling star' while Mercury and Venus are 'glowing with unmitigated day' (p.27). She makes us vividly aware of the structure of the solar system as it was conceived in the eighteenth century.

For all this, Carter's metaphor of flight never comes alive as vividly as Rowe's literalised enthusiastic flight. She does not allow us to sense a path of flight, either outwards into the Milky Way or back inwards towards the Sun, and the transitions she makes have a directness and rapidity that suggest the quick transitions of an observer with a telescope rather than, as with Rowe, a poetic sensibility in flight. As Montagu Pennington makes clear in his biography, Carter was fascinated by Rowe's works to the extent that she visited the house in Frome where Rowe had lived and died and corresponded with Rowe's literary executor, Theophilus Rowe.⁴⁹ However, her influential father's criticism of Rowe's 'tincture of enthusiasm' and his caution 'not to read [her poems] with too much pleasure' may have put her off making her flight with a wing more fully-fledged.⁵⁰ 'Whereas Elizabeth Rowe imagined a physical afterlife full of bodily satisfactions,' Norma Clarke points out, 'Elizabeth

⁴⁹ Montagu Pennington, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter: With a New Edition of Her Poems, Including Some Which Have Never Appeared before*. (London: Printed for F.C. and J. Rivington, 1808), Vol. 1 p. 64-9.

⁵⁰ Letter excerpted in *Memoirs*, p.65n. Original untraced.

Carter restricted her visions of eternity to the mind.’⁵¹ Unmarried and deeply bookish, Carter chose to reject from her poetics everything akin to Rowe’s sensuous side. Abandoning the passionate and fiery devotion of Rowe, she took the path that lead her to the role she was to be most celebrated for, the translator and espouser of the stoic philosophy of endurance and dispassionate self-control.

Instead of soaring directly to Heaven on wings of inspiration, then, Carter produces the evidence of the night sky and the world around her in order to assert that an informed, rational mind may ‘Or on the earth, or in th’ethereal road, / Survey the footsteps of a ruling GOD’ (p.27), a God ‘whose presence, unconfined to time or place / Fills all the vast immensity of space’ (p.28). As one might expect from a translator of Algarotti, this is a very Newtonian picture of a God who exists throughout the realm of absolute space, the imperceptible substance of the universe that contains and subsumes into itself the merely relative measurements of place used in human affairs.⁵² She also has a Newtonian understanding of how God must have ‘Imprest the central and projectile force’ (p.28); that is, he was originally responsible for assigning to each planet the correct balance of gravitation and orbital momentum in order for them not to fly off into interstellar space or collapse into the Sun’s gravity well. The voice of the poem here is capable of drawing authoritative conclusions from astronomical observations or clothing the pronouncements of Newton in the garb of verse, but notably absent is Elizabeth Singer Rowe’s visionary authority as well as her conviction of a fundamentally Earth-centred, placial universe where even the interstellar void is inhabited by the spirits of the dead and the yet-to-be-born, a vision no longer tenable after the publication of the *Principia Mathematica*.

⁵¹ Norma Clarke, ‘Soft Passions and Darling Themes: From Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674–1737) to Elizabeth Carter (1717–1806)’, *Women’s Writing*, 7 (2000), 353–71 (p.366).

⁵² See Casey, *Fate of Place*, p.142.

Unusually the poem concludes, rather than begins, with a dedication to Thomas Wright under the poetic name of Endymion, the shepherd boy beloved by the Moon. This is a peculiarly self-effacing passage wherein Carter resigns her spatial power and poetics to her male friend with the lines ‘To minds like thee, these subjects best belong; / Whose curious thoughts with active freedom soar, / And trace the wonders of creating pow’r’ (p.28). This seems especially odd given that in the preceding lines, which have traced first the workings of the night sky and then of the process of Creation, Carter has already demonstrated how well she can perform both these roles. One might consider it a graceful gesture, the amateur astronomer giving way to the professional, if not for the line following where Carter disparages her own poetic skills by allowing that ‘some nobler pen shall speak thy fame’ (p.28). Instead, she lets ‘the Muse indulge a gentler theme [...] Thy social temper and diffusive heart’ (p.28). These charms are of course important even to an astronomer, and Carter allows that in their absence ‘Science turns Pride, and Wit a common foe’ (p.28), but they are relative virtues, important for human interaction in human places rather than for comprehension of the spatial realm above them. For Carter, neither enraptured flight or empirical understanding of the spatial realm is sufficient without the human qualities that belong to the world. Unlike Rowe, whose spirit is ready to forsake her mortal frame at a moment’s notice, Carter is sensitive both to the needs and demands of her material frame. In another poem, ‘A Dialogue’, Body and Mind wrangle with one another like husband and wife, and Mind complains,

I did but step out, on some weighty Affairs,
To visit, last Night, my good Friends in the Stars,
When, before I was got half as high as the Moon,
You dispatch’d Pain and Langour to hurry me down [...] (p.39)

The imaginative flight is here restrained by bodily evil, which requires the aid of stoic philosophy to master and surmount. Unlike Rowe, Carter cannot access the Miltonic

authority for inspired flight into space beyond a compromised bodily vessel. She attributes the ‘active freedom’ of soaring thoughts to others, like Thomas Wright and perhaps like Elizabeth Singer Rowe. In the meantime, the achievement of Carter’s self-presentation is well summed-up by Carolyn D. Williams when she writes, ‘Her feminized image of the human spirit is neither rapacious, sensual, nor foolish; at death it will achieve full autonomy.’⁵³ It may be difficult not to consider that the movement from the astronomical sublime to the praise of human sentiment has resulted in a rather bathetic conclusion to Carter’s astronomical poem, yet it remains consistent to her self-presentation.

Despite her later proficiency in languages and classical learning, Elizabeth Carter, according to her nephew’s memoir, was a relatively slow-developing child. By contrast Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825) was a child prodigy who could read by the age of two and was receiving her first astronomy lessons at seven.⁵⁴ Growing up under the care of her father John Aikin, who taught at a Dissenting academy in Kibworth, she was surrounded by a far superior system of education than was available to men in the traditional Anglican schools. Even if, as the daughter of the tutor of a boy’s school, she was not able to take a class, she profited greatly by her company, her father’s extensive library and the general atmosphere of robust intellectual enquiry.

Her biographer, William McCarthy, discovers in her encounters with Fontenelle and Carter’s translation of Epictetus some of the most noteworthy and influential events of her intellectual biography.⁵⁵ Her appreciation of the works of Elizabeth Singer Rowe inspired her ‘Verses on Mrs Rowe’ declaring ‘Bright pattern of thy sex, be thou my muse,’ (39) just as

⁵³ Carolyn D. Williams, ‘Poetry, Pudding and Epictetus: The Consistency of Elizabeth Carter’, in *Tradition in Transition: Women Writers, Marginal Texts, and the Eighteenth-Century Canon*, ed. by Alvaro Ribeiro and James G. Basker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.15.

⁵⁴ William McCarthy, *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp.20, 22.

⁵⁵ McCarthy, *Voice of the Enlightenment*, pp.44-6, 51-8.

Carter before her had written ‘Thy spotless verse shall regulate my muse’ (p.31). Both McCarthy and Stuart Curran identify in Barbauld’s poem the assertion of a poetic genealogy, in which Barbauld ‘adopts Carter as the prism through which to define her own continuity with Elizabeth Rowe’ and combines the virtues of the two poets by assimilation.⁵⁶ It is hardly surprising that after a number of poems of great accomplishment and variety, her first published volume, *Poems* (1773) closes with ‘A Summer Evening’s Meditation’, a work that combines Rowe’s faculty for inspired flight with Carter’s accurate astronomical knowledge.⁵⁷

This is not to deny that Barbauld was also conscious of the wider tradition of cosmic voyage poetry that has recently been researched and analysed by Rob Browning.⁵⁸ Yet many features of the poem are peculiar to both Barbauld’s identity as a woman and a dissenter, and borrow from the interwoven poetic canon of each. Browning, for example, gives relatively short shrift to Rowe, to Carter, or to the dissenting poet Mark Akenside’s *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, choosing to emphasise a largely canonical line of influence – from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* to Thomson’s *The Seasons* to Young’s *Night Thoughts*, concluding with Barbauld’s ‘Meditation.’ For Browning, Barbauld’s female precursors, with their ‘tentative, truncated texts [adhering] to restraints placed on their gendered imaginations by devotional and social mores’ are distinctly lesser influences.⁵⁹ Yet the actual flight of the soul from the body into the heavens is a theme that is most clearly sounded in the dissenting tradition of Rowe and Barbauld, and to which Akenside also belonged. Compared to these poems of

⁵⁶ Stuart Curran, ‘Romantic Women Poets: Inscribing the Self’, in *Women’s poetry in the enlightenment: the making of a canon 1730-1820*, ed. by Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 145–66, 162; McCarthy, *Voice of the Enlightenment*, 109–10.

⁵⁷ The manner in which she was influenced by the astronomy of the time is analysed in Dometa Wiegand, ‘Barbauld: “Embryo Systems and Unkindled Suns”’, in *The New Science and Women’s Literary Discourse: Prefiguring Frankenstein*, ed. by Judy A. Hayden (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 183–200. Wiegand looks forward to the Romantic lyric, rather than back to the eighteenth-century poets, but provides a wealth of eighteenth-century astronomical detail.

⁵⁸ Rob Browning, ‘Anna Letitia Barbauld’s “A Summer Evening’s Meditation” and the Cosmic Voyage since *Paradise Lost*’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39 (2016), 395–412.

⁵⁹ Browning, ‘Barbauld and the Cosmic Voyage’, p.404.

astronomical exploration, neither Thomson nor Young really leave their earthbound viewpoint: Thomson in *Summer* is more concerned with the spectacle of comets and constellations from the Earth, and Young conveys his celestial panorama as a lecture to Lorenzo, the fictional auditor of most of his meditations.

Astronomy, as well as the other practical sciences, was a staple of the dissenting education.⁶⁰ In the *Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry* (1777), which some critics believe to have exerted an influence over Barbauld's poetics, her brother John Aikin wrote a manifesto for a new poetry based on accurate natural and scientific observation, criticising as he did so the old-fashioned astronomy present in Young's *Night Thoughts*.⁶¹ 'A Summer Evening's Meditation' is not only accurate in its portrayal of contemporary astronomy, but dramatic and compelling in its evocation of imaginative flight from known places into unknown space.

Recovering throughout its course much of the blank-verse dynamism eradicated from eighteenth-century poetry by the agents of correctness and regularity, Barbauld begins with the short exclamation 'Tis past!' evoking a palpable sense of relief at the closing of the male-inflected day.⁶² The sun, the 'sultry tyrant of the south'(1), is made to sound like an oriental sultan, while the three personified female figures of Dian the Moon, Venus the

⁶⁰ See Irene Parker, *Dissenting Academies in England: Their Rise and Progress and Their Place among the Educational Systems of the Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914); J W Ashley Smith, *The Birth of Modern Education: The Contribution of Dissenting Academies 1660-1800* (London: Independent Press, 1954).

⁶¹ John Aikin, *An Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry* (Warrington, 1777), p.30. See also Stephen Daniels and Paul Elliott, "'Outline Maps of Knowledge": John Aikin's Geographical Imagination', in *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle 1740-1860*, ed. by Felicity James and Ian Inkster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 94–125; Sharon Ruston, 'The Application of Natural History to Poetry' <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/poetry-and-science/essays/ruston_hist/> [accessed 26 April 2015].

⁶² Anna Letitia Barbauld, *A Summer Evening's Meditation* in *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Literary Texts, 2002), l.1. Line references hereafter will be given in parentheses. McCarthy identifies this opening exclamation as a specimen of the emotional intensity authorised by Rowe's example: see *Voice of the Enlightenment*, p.60.

evening star and Eve usher in a twilight no longer garish and dazzling, but filled with 'mild maiden beams / Of tempered lustre.' (4-5)

Eve here is clearly meant by Barbauld as the personification of Evening rather than the wife of Adam, but the clause in which she appears is so laden with Miltonic echoes as to continually present his Eve to our mind.

While meeken'd Eve,
Her cheek yet warm with blushes, slow retires
Through the Hesperian gardens of the west,
And shuts the gates of day. (14-17)

Firstly, there is the epithet 'meeken'd', which recalls Milton's use of 'meek' to describe Eve's behaviour in no less than four places throughout *Paradise Lost* (IV. 292, X. 1085, XI. 162, XII. 597); secondly, the blushing, to which Milton's Eve is also prone (V. 10, VIII. 511, IX. 887); and finally the 'Hesperian gardens' which recall the passage in Satan's flight through interstellar space where the other worlds are described as being 'Like those Hesperian gardens famed of old' (IV. 586). This last reference adumbrates Barbauld's own flight into interstellar space, but the cumulative effect conveys the notion that Eve is securing the bounds of a new Eden from which it is man himself who has been exiled.

Contemplation now emerges from the shades in which she spent the day and 'with radiant finger points / To the blue concave swelled with breath divine' (23-4). Browning concurs with Jennifer Martin in asserting a reference here to Milton's 'Il Penseroso', but while the mood and theme of Milton's contemplative poem clearly have some influence on Barbauld's own, I am cautious about drawing too close a link between 'Him that yon soars on golden wing / Guiding the fiery-wheeléd throne, / The Cherub Contemplation.'⁶³ Barbauld's

⁶³ Browning, 'Barbauld and the Cosmic Voyage', p.404; Jennifer Krusinger Martin, *Raising a Nation: Anna Letitia Barbauld as Artistic and Pedagogic Mother of the Romantic Citizen* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northeastern University, 2010), pp.181-8; John Milton, 'Il Penseroso' in *The*

Contemplation does not soar into the Heavens (though Martin seems to think she does), she merely indicates the night sky for the speaker's consideration. Examination of the Heavens precipitates internal soul-searching which uncovers the immortal part of her nature: 'an embryo God; a spark of fire divine' (56), which will endure long after the sun itself goes out. Only once this insight has been achieved is the imaginative flight ready to begin, departing 'On fancy's wild and roving wing' (71). Elizabeth Carter also began her flight, in the lines already quoted above, with a wandering Fancy given wings by active Contemplation. Barbauld draws on and extends this notion, and her vivid personification testifies to her fine consideration of the nature of the two abilities. To give the imagination the power of flight is a natural metaphor, yet contemplation is a deeper and less active mode of thought, best undertaken in stillness. Hence, Contemplation is portrayed as a hermetic philosopher who indicates the night sky as a suitable subject for all the powers of thought, but it is fancy or imagination who gives the speaker the impetus to actually launch herself into space.

Barbauld's view of the night sky seems at first to effect a return to the placial universe of Elizabeth Singer Rowe, with the homely images of the stars as 'these friendly lamps, / For ever streaming o'er the azure deep / To point our path, and light us to our home' (37-9). The salutation 'Ye citadels of light, and seats of Gods! / Perhaps my future home' (61-2) in particular seems to draw upon Rowe's 'Ye starry mansions, hail! my native skies! / Here in my happy pre-existent state, / (A spotless mind) I led the life of gods' (8-10). Whereas Carter's cosmos is on the brink of becoming a uniquely masculine space of abstract Newtonian enquiry, Barbauld reinstates it as both a human and a feminine place.

Having followed Carter's course out to Saturn at the furthest edge of the solar system, Barbauld moves beyond into interstellar space. Where Carter had timidly suggested that every star 'Perhaps illumines some system of its own' Barbauld boldly affirms the existence of

ten thousand suns [...]
Of elder beam, which ask no leave to shine
Of our terrestrial star, nor borrow light
From the proud regent of our scanty day;
Sons of the morning, first-born of creation,
And only less than he who marks their track
And guides their fiery wheels. (83-9)

Hitherto I have avoided drawing comparisons with Satan in *Paradise Lost* because I believe that placing too heavy an emphasis on the cosmic voyage as a kind of Satanic rebellion against a repressive patriarchal culture is to force an anachronistic reading of *Paradise Lost* onto the poet. It is helpful to keep in mind that even within *Paradise Lost*, Satan does not possess a monopoly on interstellar travel; the angel Raphael also descends from Heaven to Eden in a memorable verse passage. I have tried to argue that the transgressiveness of cosmic voyage poetry is bound up with the woman poet's assertion of her poetic authority, her right to the cosmological vision of Milton, not a pre-Romantic identification with the figure of the Satanic over-reacher.

The passage above is the greatest temptation and test of this reading. It marks the point in the poem where Barbauld's radical politics are at their most evident, and where she deliberately challenges us with the Satanic interpretation, with the reference to the stars as 'Sons of the morning' which recalls the passage rendered in the King James Bible as 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!' (Isiah, 14.12). It makes us fully aware of the scope of her daring, her potential rebelliousness, but also gestures backwards towards the poem's beginning, where the 'proud regent of our scanty day' was also berated as an oppressive masculine figure and where the evening star was greeted by its alternative feminine title of Venus. Finally, with the lines about the stars being lesser than their Creator

and Prime Mover, Barbauld asserts her orthodoxy. The allegorical message of the passage is not one of rebellion, but one of equality. The stars, though so far distant as to be mere pinpricks of light, are not inferior in brightness, splendour or antiquity to the sun. In a similar way, the poet, having discovered in herself through reflection and contemplation ‘an embryo God, a spark of fire divine’ (56) is able to assert a spiritual equality with any haughty monarch.

It seems for a moment as if this revelation may be the cue for the retreat back to the sadly diminished globe of Earth, as in Rowe, or to Carter’s domesticity, but instead, in a piece of blank verse dynamism not unworthy of Milton himself, Barbauld’s flight expands into unbounded space.⁶⁴

Here I must stop,
Or is there aught beyond? What hand unseen
Impels me onward thro’ the glowing orbs
Of habitable nature; far remote,
To the dread confines of eternal night,
To solitudes of vast unpeopled space,
The deserts of creation, wide and wild;
Where embryo systems and unkindled suns
Sleep in the womb of chaos (89-97)

Beyond the human and placial, here extended to a far greater realm than Carter would allow, is the extensive space of Newtonian conception. With the ‘hand unseen’ impelling the poet into the realm of a Chaos beyond the ordered systems of the stellar universe, we have the invocation of a characteristically Miltonic sublime, and his description of Chaos as ‘this wilde Abyss / The womb of nature and perhaps her grave’ (*PL* II. 910-1) aligns with Barbauld’s description of it as a wild feminine space. Yet as with ‘the suns of elder beam’ in the passage immediately preceding, there is a hint that the macrocosmic and the microcosmic

⁶⁴ Daniel Watkins in *Barbauld and Visionary Poetics*, p.181, would go so far as to call it the most ambitious poetry written by anyone.

are aligned: that an inchoate creative potential abides in the ‘embryo systems and unkindled suns’ not entirely dissimilar to that of the ‘embryo God’ Barbauld discerns within herself. Further parallels are halted when ‘fancy droops / And thought astonish’d stops her bold career’ (97-8) as the sublimity of the prospect exceeds the power of imagination and expression.

Barbauld then turns to address the sublime God of this sublime universe in language that draws both from the Old Testament (‘his eyes are like the eyelids of the morn’ (Job 41. 18)) and from *Paradise Lost* (‘May I express thee unblamed?’ (*PL* III. 3)).

Where shall I seek thy presence? how unblam’d
Invoke thy dread perfection?
Have the broad eyelids of the morn beheld thee?
Or does the beamy shoulder of Orion
Support thy throne [?] (101-5)

To the question ‘where shall I seek thy presence?’ the good Newtonian would have answered ‘everywhere!’ since in Newton’s account God is co-extensive with space. Barbauld seems unwilling to accept this proposition. The gap left in the pentameter of line 102 pays tribute to the inexpressible nature of God’s glory, and the invocation to ‘look with pity down / On erring guilty man’ (105-6) appears to endorse the traditional notion of a God observing earthly doings from the empyreal regions. Gradually, however, the passage shifts its address from the Old Testament figure and arbiter of morality to the more liberal God of Barbauld’s Unitarian faith who ‘hast a gentler voice, / That whispers comfort to the swelling heart, / Abash’d, yet longing to behold her Maker’ (109-11). Here in another reversal of the two interior and exterior perspectives that dominate the poem, the dread voice of the Old Testament Deity and creator of the outward universe becomes a calm, wise, personal and internal deity.

This invocation of the gentle God who whispers words of consolation to the heart is perhaps the key to reconciling the poem with Barbauld’s prose essay ‘Thoughts on the

Devotional Taste, on Sects, and on Establishments' published in 1775, two years after 'A Summer Evening's Meditation.' The most striking passage of the essay begins with a series of dramatic and swelling clauses extolling the 'majestic order of nature' and the 'magnificent profusion of suns and systems that astronomy pours upon the mind'.⁶⁵ This sets us up for a sudden reverse, when the slow rising of rhetorical grandeur, in Barbauld's best Johnsonian mode, turns into a giddy plummet of self-abasement at being reckoned with the Author of these works, and she declares 'we grow giddy with the prospect [...] we think it almost impiety for a worm to lift its head from the dust, and address the Lord of so stupendous a universe; the idea of a communion with our Maker shocks us as presumption'.⁶⁶ This passage critiques the Miltonic sublime and its eighteenth-century post-Newtonian formulations from a devotional perspective. A God co-extensive with space would be too grand for those living in human places, and by contrast, Barbauld appeals to a more benevolent divinity, an interior presence, rather than the cosmic first mover or the stern patriarchal deity of the Old Testament.

She closes her poem in the now-familiar way, with a retreat from the wonders of space to her original terrestrial starting place, 'the known accustomed spot' (114). Striking a balance between the attitudes of the two poets, she returns willingly to 'A mansion fair and spacious for its guest / And full replete with wonders' (116-7), a metaphor for the mortal life that indicates her greater allegiance to sublunary existence than Rowe's reluctant return to the 'dusky globe' of Earth. Unlike Carter, however, she refuses to surrender her power of imaginative flight to a friend or benefactor, with the plea that his talents are greater than her own; like Rowe she preserves the power to take flight once again, at the appointed hour of

⁶⁵ Anna Letitia Barbauld, 'Thoughts on the Devotional Taste, on Sects and on Establishments' in *Selected Poetry and Prose* (Peterborough, Ont.: Blackwell, 2002), pp.215-6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.216.

her death, ‘When all these splendours bursting on my sight / Shall stand unveil’d, and to my ravish’d sense / Unlock the glories of the world unknown’ (120-2). Then, grown and unburdened, the embryo God within her will ascend to take up a new place within the wider universe.

‘A Summer Evening’s Meditation’ synthesizes and expands upon its poetic predecessors, updating Milton’s universe in accordance with Newtonian science, but also reabsorbing all that was lost when Rowe’s devotional, placial universe was eclipsed by astronomical discoveries. Barbauld’s cosmos intermingles a placial conception of the near-Earth area with a Newtonian vision of the immensity of abstract space beyond. This immensity is more than sufficient to humble the pride of the poet or the scientist, but Barbauld refuses to let the conception plunge her into abjection, and the poem closes with her awareness of a spark of divinity inside her, making her fully as capable as Rowe of ascending to the throne of her God.

The Domestic Burlesque

A key part of the enthusiasm for Barbauld that has followed on from her critical rediscovery is her sheer stylistic range and ability to command a range of literary voices. Isobel Grundy compares her to ‘a virtuoso who chooses for each rhetorical project a tool fit for the purpose, like a musician with many instruments to hand, who well knows that the instruments’ potential combinations are more numerous still.’⁶⁷ For ‘Washing-Day’, a poem published in 1797 but, as William McCarthy argues, possibly written much earlier, Barbauld ingeniously inverts the high style she had developed for ‘A Summer Night’s Meditation’ and ‘Corsica’

⁶⁷ Isobel Grundy, ““Slip-Shod Measure” and “Language of Gods”: Barbauld’s Stylistic Range”, in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: New Perspectives*, ed. by William McCarthy and Olivia Murphy (Plymouth: Bucknell University Press, 2014), pp. 23–36 (p. 26).

and which would serve her again in the controversial *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. One might think that contemplating the universe and the nature of the soul is far removed from contemplating the quotidian errands of the washing-day and yet, here as in ‘A Summer Evening’s Meditation’, Barbauld subverts notions of scale and hierarchy.

One of Barbauld’s most frequently anthologised poems, its apparent simplicity belies the complexity of the structure which blends the mock-heroic with the autobiographical. As part of her argument that the poem consists of ‘a series of rhetorical or stylistic shifts or pivots that operate formally somewhat like the volta in a sonnet’ Sonia Hoffkosh divides the poem into multiple sections including the opening invocation to the muse, the descriptions of the vicissitudes of a washing day, the narrator’s reminisces of childhood wash-days and the intriguing final passage, where the bubbles blown by the child are associated first with the new hot air balloons and then with the fabric of the poem as a whole.⁶⁸ This variety of tone and subject has proved both enticing and challenging for Barbauld’s interpreters, and critical interest in the poem has thus far been largely unimpaired by consensus. Adeline Johns-Putra follows Anne Messenger’s *His and Hers* in reading the poem from a feminist point of view ‘as a heroicisation of the domestic, and as a celebration of female-related images over male ones’, while Donna Landry criticises it for privileging the reminisces of a middle-class childhood over the experience of the labouring washer-women.⁶⁹ Sharon Smith argues that its arresting yet perplexing closing images can only be understood by appreciating the poem within the tradition of mock-heroic poetry, whilst Elizabeth Kraft claims to have achieved the

⁶⁸ Sonia Hofkosh, ‘Materiality, Affect, Event: Barbauld’s Politics of the Everyday’, in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: New Perspectives*, ed. by William McCarthy and Olivia Murphy (Plymouth: Bucknell University Press, 2014), pp. 85, 102-3.

⁶⁹ Adeline Johns-Putra, ‘Satire and Domesticity in Late Eighteenth-Century Women’s Poetry: Minding the Gap’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 33: 1 (2010), 67–87; Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women’s Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ann Messenger, *His and Hers: Essays in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986).

same insight through a new-historicist investigation of the practice of ballooning.⁷⁰ Jennifer Krusinger Martin, meanwhile, looks on the conclusion as an *ars poetica*, arguing that ‘Barbauld’s poems are, in effect, bubbles or insubstantial verse containers of experimental and seemingly contradictory aesthetics and subjectivities.’⁷¹ All of these essays class the earlier part of the poem as ‘mock-heroic’, and some include an extensive list of the blank verse features Barbauld borrowed from Milton in order to create this impression.

Is the poem, however, truly in the vein of the mock-heroic? Its opening ‘The Muses are turned gossips; they have lost / The buskin’d step, and clear high-sounding phrase’ (1-2) does not fit the patterns of the conventional epic opening (‘Of ... and ... I sing’ or ‘I, who erewhile’) and Barbauld’s portrait of the alternative ‘domestic Muse / In slip-shod measure loosely prattling on’ (3-4) defuses the pomp of its opening invocation to the muse. This invocation is an epic feature, but as Linda Hutcheon notes ‘the mock epic did not mock the epic: it satirized the pretensions of the contemporary as set against the ideal norms implied by the parodied text.’⁷² Barbauld’s poem lacks this mock-epic dynamic; the slip-shod muse does not mock or belittle the labours of the washerwomen, as Pope defused the falling-out between Arabella and Lord Petre by comparing it to the life-and-death struggles depicted in the Greek and Roman epics.

Beyond the opening verse paragraph, ‘Washing-Day’ features neither heroic debates or speeches, scenes of combat, or epic machinery. Its complex structure is not that of an epic in miniature, and neither is it presented as a fragmented episode from a larger poem, as were Jonathan Swift’s short mock-heroic poems ‘A Description of the Morning’ and ‘A

⁷⁰ Sharon Smith, “‘I Cannot Harm Thee Now’: The Ethic of Satire in Anna Barbauld’s Mock-Heroic Poetry”, *European Romantic Review*, 26 (2015), 551–73; Elizabeth Kraft, ‘Anna Letitia Barbauld’s “Washing-Day” and the Montgolfier Balloon’, *Literature and History*, 4 (1991).

⁷¹ Martin, *Raising a Nation*, p.149.

⁷² Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 44. My argument here is often indebted to Hutcheon’s clear distinctions between mock-heroic, burlesque, parody, travesty and spoof. Such distinctions are often elided by other critics.

Description of a City Shower’ as well as Barbauld’s own indisputably mock-heroic work, ‘A Fragment of an Epic Poem, Occasioned by the Loss of a game of Chess to Dr. Priestley’. In fact, Joseph Addison’s description of burlesque as a form that ‘presents mean persons in the accoutrements of heroes’ is a more fitting definition of Barbauld’s heroically enduring middle-class family.⁷³ Though the mock-heroic, the parodic and the burlesque have been occasionally confounded, Hutcheon’s careful distinction between the different definitions would also favour a reading of ‘Washing-Day’ as burlesque. It would not even be a new categorisation, since in *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* Raymond Dexter Havens classes ‘Washing-Day’ among the burlesque poems derived from John Philips’s ‘The Splendid Shilling’.⁷⁴

However, no previous critic has been willing to do this, and quite understandably so—after all, why pluck the poem from the company of Pope and Swift, from whom it seems to draw inspiration, and place it in a sub-genre of verse well-nigh excluded from the canon, and which has never produced anything of a quality to rival ‘Washing-Day’? The ambivalent language in which Samuel Johnson in *Lives of the Poets* praises Philips’s ‘original design’ is representative of the fate of the burlesque amongst literary circles since the genre’s inception.

To degrade the sounding words and stately construction of Milton, by an application to the lowest and most trivial things, gratifies the mind with a momentary triumph over that grandeur which hitherto held its captives in admiration.⁷⁵

Johnson accords Philips the praise of originality in his design, but derogates the secondary and dependent nature of the burlesque, which mocks what it cannot rival.

⁷³ Addison, *The Spectator*, No.249, II.467.

⁷⁴ Raymond Dexter Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (Cambridge, & London: Harvard University Press, & Oxford University Press, 1922), p.317. Havens does not mention Barbauld by name, placing ‘Washing-Day’ in a list of lower-class burlesques including poems with titles like ‘Poverty’, ‘A Louse’ and ‘An Old Pair of Boots’. Barbauld’s stock was evidently not high in 1922.

⁷⁵ Samuel Johnson, ‘John Philips’ in *The Lives of the most eminent English poets* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006) Vol. II, p.69.

It is worth remembering, however, that the original poems of Wordsworth and Southey were often read as unintentional burlesques by their contemporaries. Francis Jefferies lumped the three poets together in his hostile review of Wordsworth's *Poems* of 1807 when he wrote that 'All the world laughs at Elegaic stanzas to a sucking-pig—a Hymn on Washing-day—Sonnetts to one's grandmother—or Pindarics on a gooseberry-pye'.⁷⁶ Unlike Wordsworth and Southey, Barbauld's ego would have remained unruffled; she was working with the burlesque tradition from within, not attempting to create her own audience but to shape, defy and challenge their expectations. It remains to examine in greater detail what she took from the burlesque tradition, and how she moved beyond it, bringing the poem to a conclusion that deconstructs the burlesque's inbuilt distinction between the high and the low, the mean and the great.

John Philips's 'The Splendid Shilling', published in 1702, was the first Miltonic burlesque and the first poem to bring Milton's blank-verse style back into critical vogue.⁷⁷ The narrator is an indigent and indebted university student, hungry, ragged and stalked by debtors, but his purpose in the poem is mostly as a hook on which to hang grandiose and elaborate descriptions and mock-similes, such as the final passage where the rent in the poet's breeches (or 'Gallagaskins') is compared to the gash in the hull of a doomed ship. Many of Philips's successors would copy his structure sedulously, producing a kind of tertiary imitation of an already secondary form, but others would exploit the freedom of the digressive and associative burlesque similes.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Francis Jefferies, Review of *Poems, in Two Volumes* by W. Wordsworth in *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal*, 11 (October 1807), 214-31 (p.218).

⁷⁷ The best account of the context of the composition of 'The Splendid Shilling' is J. C. Pellicer, 'John Philips (1676-1709): Life, Works. and Reception' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oslo, 2002), pp.55-60. For an examination of Miltonic poetry pre-Philips, see Von Maltzahn, 'The War in Heaven and the Miltonic Sublime'.

⁷⁸ For a survey of this tradition, see Richmond P. Bond, *English Burlesque Poetry 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932).

Barbauld was not the first woman to write a Miltonic burlesque: that honour went to Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea (1661-1720), who published her ‘Fanscombe Barn’ in 1713. Original in its structure, the poem describes a pair of mock-pastoral vagrants conversing with one another in the high style of Adam and Eve. Despite a general boom in the form, there is here a yawning gap in the bibliography; until the advent of Barbauld no other Miltonic burlesque was published by a woman writer under her own name, except for Elizabeth Pennington (1732-1759) who published ‘The Copper Farthing’ in 1754.⁷⁹

Although Pennington’s presence in John Duncombe’s verse catalogue of female authors, *The Feminiad* (1751) testifies to her presence on the eighteenth-century literary scene, very little is known of her beyond her mentions in the letters of others. A few of her poems saw publication in literary miscellanies, largely after her death, and she shared the pages of the 1780 edition of the stalwart anthology *Poems of Eminent Ladies* with Barbauld, which includes a credible two of Pennington’s poems to Barbauld’s three. Rather than being an original burlesque of Milton’s style, ‘The Copper Farthing’ takes its language second-hand from ‘The Splendid Shilling’, on which it is also heavily reliant for structure, opening with ‘Happy the boy’ compared to Philips’s ‘Happy the man’ and concluding like Philips with an apocalyptic simile – here of an earthquake rather than a shipwreck.⁸⁰ The poem’s chief claim for originality is its subject, the sufferings of a schoolboy made to study without an allowance. In this, the poem makes an interesting comparison with Barbauld’s ‘A School

⁷⁹ The works consulted to verify this claim were Richmond P. Bond, *English Burlesque Poetry 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932); George Kitchin, *Burlesque and Parody in English* (London; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1931) pp.99-151; Ann Messenger, *His and Hers: Essays in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky), pp.186-196; Raymond Dexter Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (Cambridge, & London: Harvard University Press, & Oxford University Press, 1922), pp.315-22.

⁸⁰ Philips’s beginning is itself borrowed from Horace’s *Odes*, via Dryden’s translation. For a full history of the development of this trope in the eighteenth century, see Maren-Sofie Røstvig, *The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Idea, Vol. 2 1700-1760*. (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1958).

Eclogue', a much more highly wrought piece of classical (not Miltonic) burlesque. Both poets clearly enjoyed ventriloquizing the complaints of young schoolboys and translating them into the burlesqued language of the epic and the pastoral, and they share the happy notion of turning a schoolboy appetite into poetic visions of 'With plums and almonds rich, an ample cake' (Barbauld), 'Or trembling custard of delicious gout / Or frothy syllabub in copious bowl' (Pennington).⁸¹ Pennington's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* notes that her 'ability to write in a learned and heroic style, despite her limited opportunity for education, is remarkable' and it is instructive to read Pennington as Barbauld's less exalted sister, the poet Barbauld might have become if her education had been stunted or her poetic talent confined to imitation.⁸² Sadly, Pennington has attracted almost no modern critical interest and 'Fanscomb Barn' not a great deal more. Even with the revival of interest in Finch's poetry, in the late twentieth century, the only sustained analysis of 'Fanscomb Barn' thus far occurs in Messenger's *His and Hers* and Leslie A. Moore's comparison of its burlesque figures, Strolepedon and Budgeta, with Milton's Adam and Eve.⁸³

Returning then to 'Washing-Day', it can be argued that the poem makes use of the digressive and associative traditions of the burlesque in turning from description to autobiographical reminiscence, rather than the rigidly structural parody of the mock-heroic. Barbauld's choice of Miltonic blank-verse is also much more identified with the tradition of the Miltonic burlesque than with the mock-heroic, which usually makes use of heroic

⁸¹ Barbauld 'A School Eclogue' in *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, l.46; Elizabeth Pennington 'The Copper Farthing: or, the School-Boy' <<http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/TextRecord.php?action=GET&textsid=38055>> [accessed 23rd Feb 2016].

⁸² Julia Gasper, 'Pennington, Elizabeth (1732–1759)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74076>> [accessed 23 Feb 2016].

⁸³ Moore, *Beautiful Sublime*, pp.87-91.

couplets. I have asserted above that Barbauld moves beyond the burlesque, but in the early part of the poem, where the burlesque mode is strongest, the distinctions between high and low culture still abide. The comparison between the stoicism of martyred Kings and Saints and that of the housewife is funny and learned, but does not move beyond the burlesque: ‘Saints have been calm while stretched upon the rack / And Guatimozin smil’d on burning coals; / But never yet did housewife notable / Greet with a smile a rainy washing-day’ (29-32). Entirely typical of the form are the stockings whose ‘yawning rents / Gape wide as Erebus’ (37-8), which is a joke dating all the way back to ‘The Splendid Shilling’ where the poet’s hose, or Galligaskins, ‘A horrid Chasm disclose, with Orifice / Wide discontinuous’.⁸⁴ This is the point where Barbauld’s aesthetic and Pennington’s most closely coincide, as here the burlesque simile has ceased to mean anything except as a signifier of genre. After the poem takes an autobiographical turn, however, the verse becomes more surprising. Barbauld’s description of ‘my dear grandmother, eldest of forms’ (68) references Milton’s ‘sable-vested Night, eldest of things’ (PL II. 967), and wittily captures the young girl’s awe of the aged relation even as she plays affectionate tricks on her to while away the washing-day hours. At other times the narrator sits down to wonder why it is that washings should be – and here we transition to the much-examined final lines, which all critics agree to be a tour-de-force:

Sometimes thro’ hollow bole
Of pipe amused we blew, and sent aloft
The floating bubbles, little dreaming then
To see, Mongolfier, thy silken ball
Ride buoyant through the clouds [...] (79-83)

This is an image which a less original poet would have given to us as a burlesqued epic simile (something like ‘As toward the zenith through the fields of air / Montgolfier’s silken

⁸⁴ John Philips, ‘The Splendid Shilling’ in *Eighteenth Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), ll.124-5.

ball arises slow / So rise the bubbles from the hollow pipe'). With further elaboration, it might have concluded the poem; after all, both Philips and Pennington conclude their work with extended and highly overdramatic similes. However, instead of merely asserting a specious visual likeness Barbauld places the image in a temporal relation that establishes a distance between the poem's speaker and her younger self even as she yokes the balloon and the bubble together. The description of the balloon as a 'silken ball' is both accurate and emphasises the childish wonder at the visual spectacle of the highly colourful balloons. The poem's concluding lines are at the heart of the interpretative controversy.

So near approach
The sports of children and the toils of men.
Earth, air, and sky, and ocean, hath its bubbles,
And verse is one of them—this most of all. (83-6)

These lines have something in common with the famous similes of Milton that trick one's sense of scale, for example by seeming to compare Satan's spear to a tall Norwegian pine before revealing that the pine tree is but a wand beside it.⁸⁵ It is hard to tell if childish imagination is here being raised to the level of heroic endeavour, or if the exploits of the balloonists are being derogated as mere toys. An epic simile would have dissolved the ambiguity, reasserting the burlesque relation between the high endeavour of ballooning and the low activity of blowing bubbles.⁸⁶ Barbauld dissolves this division, equating high endeavour and low: the toil of physical activity with the playful childishness of blowing

⁸⁵ A passage famously analysed in Stanley Eugene Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp.23-7.

⁸⁶ Though recent works on the history of ballooning like Richard Holmes's chapter on the subject in *The Age of Wonder* and its book-length sequel, *Falling Upwards: How We Took to the Air* tend to emphasise the sensation of wonder the early balloonists created, in some circumstances familiarity gave way to contempt. In a letter of 1788, Anna Seward wrote 'The first discovery of the aerostatic powers seemed interesting and important; but when their uselessness was proved, by its being found impossible to navigate the machine, why then pursue the expensive, the dangerous experiment? When life is thrown at the mercy of the viewless winds, to answer no better purpose than that of a raree show, there cannot, I think, be a fitter object of poetic satire.' Anna Seward, *Letters*, (Edinburgh, 1811) vol. II, p.174, letter XLI.

bubbles and dreaming. Within the mundane, known place of the fireside at home, the floating bubble opens up the possibility of a journey into the unbounded realm of imaginative space.

In general, Barbauld's poetry evinces a highly developed ability both to create a detailed material impression of location, as in 'An Inventory of the Furniture in Dr. Priestley's Study' and, in a poem to Samuel Coleridge, to vividly evoke the immaterial and insubstantial world of 'metaphysic lore' that 'Looks down indignant on the grosser world, / And matter's cumbrous shapings.'⁸⁷ The greater part of 'Washing-Day' has exhibited Barbauld's talent for material detail, but in the concluding lines she dissolves the poem into the immateriality of the bubble. Elizabeth Kraft has found that 'The reader, caught up in the charm of the poem, cannot help but feel "deflated," a bit betrayed, on first reading these lines' with their 'unwelcome invocation of the pejorative meanings of "bubble"—financial ruin, impractical plans, silly chimeras' as well as the 'prosaic and insistently self-deprecatory' verse.⁸⁸ But as she also notes, the lines reference Banquo's line in *Macbeth* about the witches: 'The earth hath bubbles as the water hath / And these are of them.'⁸⁹ The concluding lines may seem to abruptly puncture the poem's more radical potentialities for celebrating women's labour or the power of the imagination, but the incorporation into its close of the unearthly power of the witches and the deceptive landscape of *Macbeth* preserve the sense of uncanny transition, derived from the associative transitions of the burlesque, that slowly develops throughout 'Washing-Day'. To read the poem as a burlesque is not to relegate it to an inferior verse genre but to appreciate how Barbauld developed and deployed the radical poetical potentialities latent in 'The Splendid Shilling'. In 'Washing-Day', she takes an apparently unpromising point of departure amidst the hurly-burly of domestic chores

⁸⁷ Barbauld, 'To Mr. S.T. Coleridge' in *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ll.34, 30-1.

⁸⁸ Kraft, ' 'Washing-Day' and the Montgolfier Balloon', p.38.

⁸⁹ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), I.iii.181-2.

and produces a poem that shows that even the most mundane and quotidian of tasks, or the most derivative and disregarded of verse genres, provides the potential for imaginative, playful and possibly even sublime mental flights, as figured in the combination of the images of the bubble and the balloon.

Conclusion

Anna Letitia Barbauld is one of the most prominent successes of the rehabilitative project of feminist literary criticism. Scarcely attended to prior to the 1990s, her reputation has been comprehensively refloated and her works are now a staple of the anthologies both of eighteenth century and of Romantic poetry, where her poems bear comparison with those of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Meanwhile, the relatively unexplored territory of her children's writing, literary criticism and political and religious writing presents a wide scope for new research projects in the decades ahead.

A voice of her confidence and virtuosity of tone, however, does not garner its authority purely from internal meditation. Barbauld's successful handling of her ambitious material draws upon many resources, not least her education and religious beliefs, but the work of her female predecessors was also particularly valuable to her development. In this chapter, we have seen how her use of the devotional sublime in her poem 'A Summer Evening's Meditation' sought to combine the placial, spiritual universe of Elizabeth Singer Rowe with the Newtonian spatial universe of Elizabeth Carter, producing a poem that evoked the unbounded space of the Miltonic sublime whilst making a claim for the importance of a placial understanding in our relationship to God and the heavens. In the corollary to the devotional sublime, the domestic burlesque, we see how when sufficient imaginative resources are used to interrogate quotidian realities, the boundaries between high and low art, between the familiar places of daily domestic labour and the infinitely malleable spaces of the imagination, dissolve entirely away. While these verse traditions are quite far from the

georgic geographies sketched by Philips, Dyer and Thomson, there is a shared concern with adapting Milton's cosmographic poetry to the demands of eighteenth-century science, together with an interest in negotiating the various scales upon which *Paradise Lost* operates, and in using Miltonic language to establish the authority of the poet's voice.

Chapter 5: Female prospects in the poems of Ann Yearsley and Charlotte Smith

John Milton did not invent the prospect poem, though as with many of the minor verse genres of the eighteenth century, he helped to shape its direction and concerns. Samuel Johnson decisively hands the palm to Sir John Denham's 'Cooper's Hill':

He seems to have been, at least among us, the author of a species of composition that may be denominated *local poetry*, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection, or incidental meditation.¹

There are three elements here made necessary to the form: a 'particular landscape', or an acknowledged geographical location; a poetic description of the same; and the addition of some extra moral, historical or scientific elaboration. With these three qualifications born in mind, it would be entirely possible to argue that Milton never wrote a true prospect poem, and that the example of Adam's vision in Books XI and XII of *Paradise Lost*, as well as Jesus's in Book IV of *Paradise Regained* are inapplicable because both are summits to which the author never actually climbed and landscapes he never saw. In both cases the prospect is far broader than the local, extending to a distance beyond anything the human eye could possibly survey unaided. Assistance is given in the first case when the angel Michael 'from Adam's eyes the film removed / Which that false fruit that promised clearer sight / Had bred; then purged with euphrasy and rue / The visual nerve' (*PL* XI. 412-5), and in the second case being facilitated by Satan's 'aerie microscope' (*PR* IV. 57). They are poetic visions far removed from the real English landscapes versified by Denham and his successors.

Yet Milton's descriptions of Eden were demonstrably influential to the prospect poem, especially as it began to broaden its reach in the early eighteenth century. Prospect

¹ Samuel Johnson, 'Denham' in *Lives of the Poets*, Volume I. p.238. For a more detailed examination of the prehistory of the topographical poem, see Robert A. Aubin, *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1936), Chapter One.

views were incorporated into a variety of genres designated variously and with large degrees of overlap as ‘georgic’, ‘descriptive’, ‘landscape’, and ‘topographical’ poetry.² Several critics have remarked how a single line from *Paradise Lost*, ‘A happy rural seat of various view,’ became the springboard for a whole school of poetry equating England, and especially the well-managed English estate, with Milton’s Eden.³ Richard Jago, not the most skilled but very possibly the most programmatic of the prospect poets, made this explicit in *Edge-Hill, or, The Rural Prospect Delineated* (1767) which opens with an inland view of

Britannia’s rural charms, and tranquil seats,
Far from the circling Ocean, where her Fleets,
Like Guardian Spirits, which round Paradise
Perform’d their nightly Watch, majestic ride[.]⁴

These lines tap into the popular description of England as an island Eden, with the warlike and colonial purpose of the navy reinterpreted as a purely defensive protective blockade. His poem is so deeply wedded to the visual perspective, and so accurate and detailed in its survey of the prospect from Edge Hill, that a modern critic has explicated the poem by a series of diagrams.⁵ This penetrating vision, however, is inseparable from the privileged historical, geographical and social knowledge with which Jago embellishes his subject. Fortified with learning, Jago’s muse transcends ordinary visual limitations. He describes how

Her piercing eye extends beyond the reach
Of optic tube, levelled by midnight sage,

² See Havens, *Influence of Milton*, pp. 236–75; Aubin, *Topographical Poetry*, pp. 33–146, (especially p.112); Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 115–24, 188–94. David Fairer has noted how as ‘a form that was characterized not by limitation but by its capaciousness the georgic [...] flourished by seeking new subjects for attention’ (p.90), and the same applies to topographical poetry: see Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longman, 2003).

³ Karen O’Brien, ‘Imperial Georgic 1660-1789’, in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850*, ed. by Gerald M MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 167; Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, p. 115.

⁴ Richard Jago, *Edge-Hill, Or, The Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralized* (London: J. Dodsley, 1767) l.1-4. The opening couplet is not typical of the poem as a whole, which is written in blank verse.

⁵ John Wilson Foster, ‘The Measure of Paradise: Topography in Eighteenth-Century Poetry’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 9.2 (1975), 232–56.

At the moon's disk, or other distant sun,
 And planetary worlds beyond the orb
 Of Saturn. Nor can intervening rocks
 Impede her search. Alike the silvan gloom
 Or Earth's profoundest caverns she pervades
 And to her favourite sons makes visible
 All that may grace or dignify the song,
 Howe'er enveloped from mortal ken.
 So Uriel, wing'd regent of the sun,
 Upon the evening beam from Paradise
 Came gliding down; so on its sloping ray
 To his bright charge returned. So the heavenly guest
 From Adam's eyes the carnal film removed,
 On Eden's hill, and purged his visual nerve
 To see things yet unform'd, and future deeds.⁶

The description of Jago's muse is absolutely saturated in Miltonic language, accentuated and developed by the two similes referring to events in *Paradise Lost*. As such, it is a fair index of the direction in which eighteenth-century blank verse poetry took Milton's poetry of vision, beginning with Thomson's use of a similar kind of vision to Jago in his description of the hydrological cycle. The author of *Paradise Lost* was sceptical of the capacity of new technology to augment man's sight to the point where it could rival the unfallen vision of Eve and Adam; 'the glass / Of Galileo, less assured' (*PL* V. 261-2) aspires towards but always falls short of the vision which the muse, a figure for divine Grace, accords the blind poet. Jago's muse, however, is caught up in the networks of Enlightenment knowledge and its project of categorising and naming.⁷ Her reach extends from astronomy to forestry to geology, and Jago's appropriation of Adam's time-spanning sight allows him to trace not only the civil war Battle of Edge Hill but also the geological formation of the hill itself.

⁶ Jago, *Edge-Hill*, I.497-513.

⁷ See Jonathan Lamb's very pertinent question in 'Scorbutic Fruit and the Problem of Sin', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 56.3 (2016), 495-514 (p. 496): 'if the desire of knowledge caused the Fall, what part will it play in colonizing the earth? Will human grossness merely stain it, or might it be possible for the senses to be purged and corrected, just as Adam's eyes have been by Michael, and to yield knowledge as pure as human flesh once was?'

Unlike the cosmological sublime tradition explored in the previous chapter, however, the prospect, and the networks of knowledge that assured its vision, were very male arenas. Even in *Paradise Lost*, it is Adam who ascends the hill with Michael in the final books, to look across the world and witness the future of mankind until the birth of Christ. Eve waits sleeping below for the duration of her husband's instruction. Although it is possible to argue with Diane McColley that Milton 'puts Eve in a position that, once more, subordinates in order to exalt', revealing to Eve in her dream everything that Adam witnesses in reality, Eve has still been barred from ascending the hill and standing as Adam's equal in visual authority.⁸ Such exclusion also applies in the eighteenth century: Christine Gerrard has argued that 'women poets fail, or perhaps refuse, to 'command' the landscape in the way that male poets do', citing the failure of any female poet prior to Ann Yearsley's 'Clifton Hill' (1785) to write 'a full scale 'loco-descriptive' or georgic poem' on a par with Philips's *Cyder*, Thomson's *The Seasons*, Dyer's *The Fleece* or William Cowper's *The Task*.⁹ This zone of exclusion does not entirely hold; Mary Chandler's *The Description of Bath* (1733), a work in heroic couplets inspired by Pope's *Windsor Forest*, is at least one poem that transgresses into the territory of the prospect before Yearsley, even if it arrives by a different line of influence.

All this proves, however, is that the borderline was not formally or rigorously policed. Chandler and Yearsley are exceptional figures, labouring-class poets whose familiarity with their immediate landscapes is the product of daily labour. Their perspective is quite unlike the perspective of the typical prospect poem, which, as John Barrell has argued, is heavily

⁸ Diane Kelsey McColley, *Milton's Eve* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 213.

⁹ Gerrard, Christine, 'The Country and the City', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1690-1750*, ed. by Ros Ballaster (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 61–80 (p.63). Other forms of female georgic are explored in Kate Lilley, 'Homosocial Women and Georgic Verse Epistle', in *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment*, ed. by Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blair (Basingstoke and London, 1999), pp. 167–83. Ann Yearsley is in many ways an exceptional figure among women writers in the period, as I shall explore later in this chapter.

dependent on the supposedly disinterested viewpoint of the country aristocracy: the ‘comprehensive vision of the retired man of landed property’ in order to legitimate its sweeping survey and general endorsement of society, property and industry.¹⁰ Women, relegated to the domestic or private sphere, were not permitted to have an investment in the social landscape surveyed by the male poets, and often lacked (or were unwilling to show) the wide learning on which the authoritative vision of the georgic or prospect poem depended. Though Stuart Curran characterises the women’s tradition as that of ‘vision’ rather than the ‘visionary’ scope of the Romantic poets, he makes it clear that this ‘vision’ is one of close, detailed and percipient observation of their surroundings, not the wider observation of views and vistas.¹¹ Meanwhile according to Jacqueline Labbe:

Achieving the eminence is a privilege of the male writer, an extension of the social privileges his gender brings him. Still, built into this privilege is a burdensome assumption: the almost obligatory obedience to this standard both of literature and manliness [...] This traditional place of prominence is further complicated for the woman author who, in most cases barred by law from the rights of ownership, cannot easily ascend the hill and partake of this disinterested view. Opposing, then, the legitimacy of the masculine viewpoint is what I identify as the feminine and disenfranchised perspective.¹²

This conception of the prospect view as an exclusively male possession in which the place of the female author is a troubled one makes an excellent analytical starting point for considering the poems of Smith and Yearsley. In attempting to write poems that utilise the gendered prospect vision, they are venturing into territory where their precarious authority of perspective is often mirrored by a precarious and unstable viewing position, and a sense that the fall that awaits them should they overbalance has greater psychological and social meaning than a simple long drop.

¹⁰ John Barrell, *English Literature in History, 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), p.61.

¹¹ Stuart Curran, ‘Romantic Poetry: The I Altered’, in *Romanticism and feminism*, ed. by Anne Kostelanetz Mellor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.189.

¹² Jacqueline M Labbe, *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p.xii-xiii.

Despite this, both poets were working with a rather old-fashioned form. By the end of the eighteenth century, the innovations of the prospect poem appeared to have been exhausted. It had become, in John Wilson Foster's words, 'the province of country clergymen, amateur naturalists and part-time historians (often rolled into one man)'.¹³ When first Ann Yearsley and then Charlotte Smith approached the prospect and claimed its authority, they relied on a different kind of poetry: not one which related the facts of history and geology under a gilded layer of poetical elaboration, but one which relied on the personal forces of sympathy and memory to achieve its sweeping view.

That Smith and Yearsley have not yet been subject to a detailed comparative analysis, despite their similarities, is a function not only of their late rise to prominence (Charlotte Smith's poems were first republished in a scholarly edition in 1993, while a complete edition of Yearsley's poems only became available in 2013), but of the categories into which critics have slotted them. In her 1996 biography, Mary Waldron made a strong argument for Yearsley's position as a transitional figure between eighteenth-century poetry and Romanticism, but repeated deconstructions of the label 'Romantic' in the decades since have rather drained the force from her argument.¹⁴ Instead, critical interest on her is two-pronged, alighting either on her status as a female labouring-class poet in a tradition begun by Mary Collier's 'The Woman's Labour' (1739) or on her conflicted relationship with her patron, the conservative writer and educator Hannah Moore.¹⁵ Moreover, as Tim Burke notes, 'her poetic achievements have continued to be muted, to some degree, by the attention given to her attractive biographical drama of discovery and dispute'.¹⁶ Yearsley has been valued for what

¹³ Foster, 'The Measure of Paradise', p.234.

¹⁴ Mary Waldron, *Lactilla, Milkwoman of Clifton: The Life and Writing of Ann Yearsley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Key examples of these two critical strands would be Landry, *The Muses of Resistance*; Kerri Andrews, *Ann Yearsley and Hannah More, Patronage and Poetry: The Story of a Literary Relationship* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013).

¹⁶ Tim Burke, quoted in Kerri Andrews, *Patronage and Poetry*, p.3.

her life tells us about patronage relationships and labouring class writers more than for what she actually writes, and a new critical edition is only just beginning to redress the balance. Charlotte Smith, meanwhile, has had a well-documented influence on William Wordsworth, who described her as ‘a lady to whom English verse is under greater obligations than are likely to be either acknowledged or remembered.’¹⁷ This in turn has made her poems a popular quarry for critics seeking to examine the beginnings and underpinnings of Romanticism in what Jacqueline Labbe dubs as ‘the Smith/Wordsworth complex.’¹⁸ Despite being exact contemporaries, Smith and Yearsley have wound up on opposite sides of the retrospective divide between Romantic poetry and the poetry of the eighteenth century.

Between the two poets, one a milkwoman and the other a gentlewoman fallen into poverty, a large class gap would have been present. However, there is evidence to show they were familiar with each other’s work and reputation. The 1793 catalogue of Ann Yearsley’s library contains all five of the novels Smith had written up to that date, including *The Old Manor House*, which had only been published in January of that year.¹⁹ Meanwhile, during a Bristol-set episode in her 1794 novel *The Banished Man*, Charlotte Smith incorporated a sonnet praising ‘the native genius [...] whose Heav’n-taught skill / Charmed the deep echo’s of the rifted shore’, glossing the compliment in a footnote as a recognition of the work of Ann Yearsley and the late Thomas Chatterton.²⁰ Her continuing interest in the milkwoman poet is shown by the presence of her name on the subscription list of Yearsley’s last and most

¹⁷ William Wordsworth, footnote to ‘Stanzas Suggested in a Steamboat off Saint Bee’s Head, on the Coast of Cumberland’, quoted in Jacqueline M Labbe, *Writing Romanticism: Charlotte Smith and William Wordsworth, 1784-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.5.

¹⁸ Jacqueline M Labbe, *Writing Romanticism: Charlotte Smith and William Wordsworth, 1784-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.18.

¹⁹ Ann Yearsley, *Catalogue of the Books, Tracts, &c. Contained in Ann Yearsley’s Public Library, No.4, Crescent, Hotwells* (Bristol, 1793), pp. 13, 19, 20, 32.

²⁰ Charlotte Smith, *The Banished Man* (London, 1794), vol.IV, p.237. The footnote is not printed in the version of the poem preserved in *Elegaic Sonnets*, and hence has never made it into an edition of Smith’s poetry.

accomplished volume of verse, *The Rural Lyre* (1796).²¹ This seems rather appropriate given the list of qualities both women share: the ambition to attain renown in the three great literary forms of novels, plays and poetry; a dauntless independence; and a poetic view of landscape in which the uncertainty of their situations made it impossible for them to write with the complacent assurance of Jago, Dyer or Thomson.

Ann Yearsley on Clifton Hill

Before his death in 1795, Ann Yearsley was in the habit of long conversations with her friend James Shiells, a gardener and nurseryman who had made his fortune designing and selling gardens in London.²² Both clearly enjoyed each others company, and at one point they discussed the Classical concept of Chaos, as it was described by the Roman poet Lucretius and vividly described in English by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*. The conversation proved memorable enough for Yearsley that she alluded to it into her poem ‘To the Memory of James Shiells Esq. Aged Sixty-Six.’

The ancient Chaos struck me as a void
Dreary and vast, whence hollow murmurs rose:
I question’d, if some universe destroy’d
Might not its mingled atoms once compose?
‘Ah think not, Anna!’ was thy mild reply,
‘That back to Time’s dark birth thy daring thought shall fly.’²³

The idea of Chaos captures Yearsley’s imagination, and prompts her to a heterodox speculation on the existence of a previous universe, now destroyed. This earns her a gentle rebuke from Shiells who cautions her that, like Anna Letitia Barbauld at the edge of space in

²¹ Ann Yearsley, *The Rural Lyre* (London, 1796) p.iv. Smith’s fellow sentimental sonneteer, the Reverend William Lisle Bowles, is also listed as a subscriber.

²² For James Shiells’s gardening career, see the trade bill preserved at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, <<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/tradebills/selling/25.html>> [accessed 20 September 2017].

²³ Ann Yearsley, ‘To the Memory of James Shiells Esq. Aged Sixty-Six’ in *The Collected Works of Ann Yearsley*, ed. Kerri Andrews (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), Vol.1, pp.218-9, ll.19-24.

‘A Summer Evening’s Meditation’, she is moving beyond the bounds of human speculation. It captures Yearsley’s Miltonic ambition, and her profound interest in philosophical and cosmographic questions far beyond what might have been thought of as the sphere of a Bristol milkwoman’s knowledge. Although this poem appears in Yearsley’s third and last volume of verse, *The Rural Lyre* (1796), its interest in classical learning and in the cosmological scope of the poet’s ‘daring thought’ is consonant with the very first account of Yearsley we possess, in a letter written in 1784 by her original patron, Hannah More.

I asked who were her favorite authors? ‘Among the Heathens,’ said she, ‘I have met with no such Composition as in Virgil’s Georgics.’ How I stared! besides the choice was so professional. Of English Poets her favorites are Milton and Dr Young, the latter she said has an ardour and boldness in his Imagination that was very delightful to her.²⁴

Yearsley’s knowledge of Virgil’s poetry, if only through translation, displays her appetite for consuming classical poetry as well as her understanding that a georgic model might well be suitable for her own verse. Her enthusiasm for the work of Milton and Young intimates the ardency and boldness of her own imagination and pursuit of knowledge. *Paradise Lost* would certainly have appealed to Yearsley; for working class writers, the poem’s difficult language and exalted status as a national work made it, in Joseph Crawford’s words, ‘a talisman of the literary culture that they aspired to join’.²⁵ As More’s astonishment indicates, this is a very neatly weighed and professional set of literary influences for someone whose knowledge of poetry was assembled from books donated to her mother and prints in bookshop windows.

More was impressed with Yearsley and keen to do something to raise her circumstances. The previous winter, Yearsley and her family had been discovered by a benevolent gentleman sheltering in a stable in Clifton, utterly destitute and starving, with

²⁴ Hannah More to Elizabeth Montagu, quoted in Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 72.

²⁵ Joseph Crawford, *Raising Milton’s Ghost* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), p.8.

Yearsley herself pregnant with her fifth child. While Yearsley herself recovered, the ordeal led to the death of Yearsley's mother. By the time More met her, Yearsley was struggling to re-establish herself by selling milk from door-to-door, along with copies of her poetry. More decided that the best way to help her was to publish a volume of Yearsley's poetry by subscription. Through her extensive correspondence networks, More succeeded in raising a glittering and substantial list of subscribers as well as contributing a prefatory letter introducing Yearsley and the circumstances of her life.

After the volume's publication, Hannah More and Ann Yearsley were to have a sensational falling out over the management of the proceeds, and their troubled relationship has been the subject of numerous books and scholarly articles by critics intrigued by what the unfolding drama has to tell us about class, patronage and relationships between women in the eighteenth century. However, there is a danger that this dispute overshadows the poetic achievement of the *Poems on Several Occasions*, particularly given the autobiographical nature of much of Yearsley's poetry. Here Madeline Kahn's celebration of the volume as a rare object, the work of a female author overseen by a female editor in a largely collaborative process, forms a healthy corrective to critics such as Catherine Keohane and Donna Landry, who have berated More for her class snobbery and her insistence that Yearsley's poetic success should not encourage her to develop ideas above her station.²⁶ It is noteworthy that while More introduces Yearsley as a member of the deserving poor and the object of middle-class charity, she also raised many themes that recur in Yearsley's poetry, including the struggle between natural genius and deficient education, and the comparison between Yearsley and Thomas Chatterton, Bristol's infamously neglected poetic son. Most

²⁶ Madeleine Kahn, 'Hannah More and Ann Yearsley: A Collaboration Across the Class Divide', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 25 (1996), 203–23; Catherine Keohane, 'Ann Yearsley's "Clifton Hill" and Its Lessons in Reading', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 41 (2012), 233–53; Landry, *The Muses of Resistance*.

importantly, she provides a key to some of the more obscure references in Yearsley's poetry by relating events in Yearsley's life which the poet herself was either unable or unwilling to recount in verse or prose. We owe to this prefatory letter most of the details of Yearsley's most destitute period, in which More draws a veil across what occasioned the family's initial decline into poverty but sketches an affecting portrait of their discovery in the Clifton barn and the death of Yearsley's mother. The after-effects of this trauma are everywhere in Yearsley's poetry, but the subject itself is never directly addressed, and the poet relies on her editor to frame the poetry accordingly. When More writes 'I wish I could entirely pass over this part of her story; but some of her most affecting verses would be unintelligible without it', we should not under-estimate the service she is performing on Yearsley's behalf.²⁷ In fact, the prefatory letter performs its purpose so well that Yearsley republished it in her next volume of verse, *Poems on Various Subjects* (1787), with the addition of her own narrative of how she had come to fall out with her erstwhile poetic mentor.

Tensions between More and Yearsley are already evident within Yearsley's poetry, but these elements have been relatively unexplored. Particularly noticeable is the fact that the picture of More which Yearsley presents in her poetry bears little relationship either to More's own self-presentation or to her chosen path as a writer. At this period of her literary career, Hannah More had not yet founded the Sunday schools for which she was later to be well known. Though her first conduct book, *Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies* (1777) had already appeared, her reputation was not as a moralist but as a writer. Her tragedy, *Douglas*, was still occasionally revived on the London and provincial stage. Her other poems, such as *Sir Eldred of the Bower* (1775), *The Bas Bleu*, and *Florio: A Tale* (1786) wear their learning lightly, with what Horace Walpole would describe

²⁷ Hannah More, quoted from *The Collected Works of Ann Yearsley*, ed. Andrews, Appendix 1, p.278.

as ‘all the air of negligence rather than pedantry.’²⁸ We do not know if More introduced her protégé to her own poetry, but whether she did or not, Yearsley’s image of who her patron was or ought to be was rather different. Her *Poems on Several Occasions* opens with ‘Night. To Stella.’, a poem that is addressed to More and that draws heavily on the image of the sublime blank-verse poet.

her soaring spirit shares
An early heaven, anticipates her bliss,
And quaffs nectareous draughts of joy sublime;
Beyond yon starry firmament she roves,
And basks in suns that never warm’d the earth;
Newtonian systems lag her rapid flight,
She pierces thro’ his planetary worlds,
And, eager, grasps creations yet to be.²⁹

Reminiscent of James Thomson’s ‘To the Memory of Sir Isacc Newton’ in its panegyric to a figure soaring through the world of space and knowledge, this perception of More was not in line with her patron’s carefully constructed public image. Indeed, she had condemned this idea of the learned woman in her early poem, *The Search After Happiness*. In this work the young Cleora, obsessed by science, rhapsodises that ‘On daring wing my mounting spirit soared / And science through her boundless fields explored [...] Newton and Halley all my soul inspir’d’, but is rebuked by Urania, who retorts, ‘Would she the privilege of man invade? / Science for female minds was never made.’³⁰ Where Yearsley was making grand claims for More’s physico-theological knowledge, More herself had always understated her own learning.³¹ We may assume her ideas about learned women had mellowed during her association with the bluestocking circle, which included both Elizabeth Carter and Anna Letitia Barbauld (to whom Yearsley’s rhapsody would have been far better suited), but

²⁸ Horace Walpole, quoted in Stott, *Hannah More*, p.64.

²⁹ Ann Yearsley, ‘Night. To Stella’ in *Collected Works* I. ll.40-4.

³⁰ Hannah More, *The Search After Happiness: A Pastoral Drama* (Bristol, 1773), pp.17, 34.

³¹ At about the same period that *The Search after Happiness* was published, she modestly rejected the opportunity to edit an astronomical textbook, pleading that it was above her comprehension: see M G Jones, *Hannah More* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p.14.

Yearsley's refashioning of her public image into this long-rejected mode must have been disconcerting for More.

Rather than suppressing the poem, or extensively redrafting it, More and Yearsley came to an imaginative compromise—Yearsley would write a second poem to address More's unhappiness with her inflated portrayal in 'Night. To Stella'. With characteristic directness, Yearsley titled the poem 'To the Same; [i.e. More] on her Accusing the Author of Flattery, and of Ascribing to the Creature that Praise which is due only to the Creator'. Despite reiterating the gratitude she bears towards More, Yearsley launches a defence of her style.

My friends I've prais'd—they stood in heavenly guise
When first I saw them, and my mental eyes
Shall in that heavenly rapture view them still,
For mine's a stubborn and a savage will [.]³²

Yearsley defends her artistic decision by contrasting the cultivated circles that More and her friends move in with her own lack of development and opportunity, arguing that this contrast leads naturally to the kind of idealised images found in 'Night. To Stella.' Her unwillingness to abandon the aesthetic that has informed so many of the poems that made up her first volume is understandable, and her poem blends the forthrightness of her opening line 'Excuse me, Stella' with her deferential plea to 'spare the rustic Muse, / Whom Science ever scorned and errors still abuse.'³³ Yearsley initially presented herself, in line with eighteenth-century ideas of natural genius, as a woman whose rude upbringing and lack of formal education frustrated her efforts at poetic self-expression except when the theme of gratitude to a benefactor made her pour out her 'artless' rhapsodies in verse. Her poetry is hence self-conscious of its apparent status as passionate outpouring rather than measured and reflective

³² Yearsley, 'To the Same; [i.e. More] on her Accusing the Author of Flattery, and of Ascribing to the Creature that Praise which is due only to the Creator', in *Collected Works*, ll.5-8.

³³ *Ibid.*, ll. 1, 22-3

verse. Among the transformations More undergoes in 'Night. To Stella'—and possibly the one that caused her to object the most—is her Miltonic figuration as 'the fount of light, / Which pierc'd old Chaos to his depth profound'.³⁴ Here Yearsley credits More with the powers of a demi-urge, bringing the order of creation to a disordered chaos which at some level stands for Yearsley herself. More's uneasiness with the hyperbole was one among a number of signs that the poetry of gratitude was a dead-end; in 'To the Same; on her Accusing the Author of Flattery' Yearsley was already coming to the limits of the narrow range she had set herself. It was time for her to move beyond the poetics of heartfelt gratitude to a more layered and formally challenging work.

'Clifton Hill' is the final poem in *Poems on Several Occasions*, and seems to have been placed so to contrast with 'Night. To Stella.' Whereas 'Night' describes a dreamlike, allegorical landscape populated by the soaring Stella and the struggling narrator, 'Clifton Hill' is set in the daylight hours. It represents Yearsley's attempt to claim a place and an independent persona for herself within the rural landscape of Clifton. Within the poem, Yearsley turns away from the dependent poetics of patronage and the cosmographic images that have characterised the unbridgeable gap between Yearsley and More, and takes on the chorographic terrain of the prospect poem, in a work which covers a smaller territory but is not noticeably less fraught.

When Yearsley looks out from Clifton Hill, she does not see an Edenic landscape: 'Clifton Hill' depicts a vividly post-lapsarian world. In its opening lines: 'In this lone hour, when angry storms descend / And the chill'd soul deplores her distant friend', the internal and external evils of isolation and exposure that characterise Yearsley's struggles are brought

³⁴ Yearsley, 'Night. To Stella.' in *Collected Works*, ll. 143-4

immediately to our attention.³⁵ Life atop Clifton Hill in midwinter is brutally hard, as demonstrated by the introduction of the poet herself amidst the struggling birds, frozen rivers and numbed, insensible nymphs and swains. The third-person portrayal of Yearsley's poetic alter ego reminds us of her struggle within this landscape to eke out a living from the common: 'half sunk in snow, / LACTILLA, shivering, tends her fav'rite cow' (20-1). She cannot stand grandly above it, an impartial observer, but is herself part of the common and its ecosystem. Even fifty lines later, when Yearsley signifies her re-entry to the prospect as a more conventional first-person surveyor of the surrounding terrain, her arrival is abrupt, not assured. Her entrance is prefaced by the progress of a ruddy swain, who serves as a foil for Yearsley. As a man, he possesses a natural, unthinking command of the landscape, through which he strides and whistles, the focus of both fear and attraction for the female inhabitants of the hillside. His position is compromised by his lack of education: when 'The landscape rushes on his untaught mind, / Strong raptures rise, but raptures undefined' (47-8). His inchoate and untutored genius is superseded by Yearsley's hard-won literacy and poetic prowess, when she enters with the lines, 'As o'er the upland hills I take my way, / My eyes in transport boundless scenes survey' (66-7). However, no sooner has she begun the expected panoramic description of notable local features, beginning with Clifton church, 'the neat dome where sacred raptures rise, / From whence the contrite grown shall pierce the skies' (70-1), than a strong emotional turmoil disturbs the regular syntax of her heroic couplets.

It emerges that Yearlsey's mother is buried in Clifton churchyard, and the sight of it recalls to the poet an occasion when she visited the churchyard while her mother was still

³⁵ Ann Yearsley, 'Clifton Hill' in *The Collected Works of Ann Yearsley*, ed. by Kerri Andrews (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), I. II.1-2. Further references to this poem will be given parenthetically in the body of the text.

alive. This was the moment she first realized her mother was mortal, a traumatic event made more traumatic by retrospective knowledge of the circumstances of her mother's demise.

Abashed, I caught the awful truths she sung,
And on her firm resolves one moment hung;
Vain boast—my bulwark tumbles to the deep,
Amazed—alone I climb the craggy steep;
My shrieking soul deserted, sullen views
The depths below, and Hope's fond strains refuse;
I listened not—She louder struck the lyre,
And love divine, and moral truths conspire. (85-92)

This sudden intrusion of the metaphor of heights and depths, the 'craggy steep' and the 'depths below', and the switch from past to present tense, evoke the sense of a poet brought to the brink of a psychotic break and/or possible suicide. Yearsley is restored to herself by her mother's voice, rendering the poem, in the words of Donna Landry 'a text of reparation through memory: Yearsley's mother is restored to her as a figure of wisdom and power crucial to her own development as a poet—and more surprisingly—crucial to her sanity'.³⁶ However, the landscape is now underpinned by a haunting sense of the physical and psychological depths that lie beneath, particularly when Yearsley describes the 'silent, solemn, strong, stupendous heights' (118) where the Clifton suspension bridge now stands. 'Coëval with creation they look down, / And, sundered, still retain their native frown' (124-5), and the ancient cliffs retain a gloomy sense of threat, of precipitous descent, even as Yearsley turns to describing the beneficial effect of the spas at Hotwells beneath them or declares later within the poem that nature has soothed her trauma and eased her woes.

The issue of women's precarious place within the landscape and the toll this takes on their mental health rises again with the poem's concluding section which narrates the story of Louisa, the 'fair maniac' (207) who, after escaping from a convent where she'd been

³⁶ Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance*, p.137

confined at her father's request, for some time took up residence in a haystack on Clifton Hill, before being removed to a private asylum at the behest of Hannah More. By relating a gothic story of monastic captivity, escape and eventual madness, this section fulfils one of the staples of the prospect poem as a genre, the narrative episode; Robert Aubin notes that many such episodes were popular enough to be published separately in the magazines of the day.³⁷ However, unlike Thomson's romance of Palemon and Lavinia in *The Seasons* or Jago's retelling of the legend of Lady Godiva in *Edge-Hill*, Yearsley writes about a person whom she knew and would have had some contact with, and her identification with Louisa is striking. Her verse follows the progress of Louisa's plight closely: her original banishment from the 'guiltless joys' of her home life to the stereotypical gothic convent, a place of 'monastic gloom [...] Where horrid silence chills the vital lamp' (234-5), of 'solemn aisles, and death-denouncing doors' (239). Yearsley evocatively captures the irresolvable conflict between Louisa's yearning for freedom and her obligation to her monastic vows, and the lines describing her eventual descent into madness have, even within the regularity of the heroic couplet, a wildness in their sense of motion and in the mingled elemental metaphors of air and water.

THOUGHT, what art thou? Of thee she boasts no more,
O'erwhelmed, thou dy'st amid the wilder roar
Of lawless anarchy, which sweeps the soul,
Whilst her drown'd faculties like pebbles roll,
Unloos'd, uptorn, by whirlwinds of despair,
Each well-taught moral now dissolves in air (281-6)

There is a continuity between these lines, which strongly express the sense of an ordered rationality dissolving into a primordial chaos of emotion, and the fascination with the classical and Miltonic concept of Chaos Yearsley would later describe in 'To the Memory of

³⁷ Robert A. Aubin, *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1936) p.93

James Shiells'. This contributes once again to disturb the stability of the prospect station, taken for granted by so many previous poets. 'Memory, 'tis a strain / That fills my soul with sympathetic pain' (293-4) Yearsley writes near the poem's close, and the interweaving throughout the poem of conventional landscape description with self-reflection and personal memory adumbrates the direction in which Smith's *The Emigrants* and Wordsworth's 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey' would take landscape poetry.

Her other two volumes of poetry, *Poems on Various Subjects* (1787) and *The Rural Lyre* (1796) followed her decisive break with Hannah More. Yearsley is now conscious of the need to find a poetic motive to replace the confession of gratitude, and while panegyric verses to patrons do recur throughout the volumes, there is a sense of playfulness, of scope and generic ambition in the later poems that was partially stifled in the original. She briefly revisits the psychogeography of Clifton Hill in her 'Effusion. To the Right Honourable the Earl of Bristol' from *Poems on Various Subjects*. The Earl offered her the services of a patron of less unyielding moral standards than Hannah More, and later stood godfather to one of her children. The poem praises him for raising her from the mournful contemplation of her past, and yet, as she complains 'who shall sit on meditation's height, / With stoic firmness, when the piercing shriek / Of agony is heard?'³⁸ Yearsley would like to possess the pleasures of serene contemplation, but her memories and her easy sympathies draw her from her thoughtful seat. She considers the lachrymose image of herself forever reliving her misfortunes in sentimental poetry, singing 'ever mournful notes o'er Misery's stream' only to accept the aid of her new patron as she spurns this low career, for 'BRISTOL's arm has born/ My spirit from the scene, placing it high / On Hope's unmeasur'd height'.³⁹ In this secure situation, she goes on to say, she will abide until the day of judgement, when all the elements

³⁸ Yearsley, 'Effusion. To the Right Honourable the Earl of Bristol' in *Collected Works*, ll.5-7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ll.15-17.

minge and convulse into their primal Chaos. Rather than suffering a general overthrow of her own faculties in the universal uproar, she will be for the first time able to greet Bristol's soul in its purest form and offer him a true tribute of her gratitude. The poem reworks the poetics of patronage Yearsley had developed with Hannah More, blending them with elements drawn from 'Clifton Hill'. The Earl of Bristol is no angelic soaring figure in comparison to whom Yearsley is an abject dweller in darkness, but a friendly arm conveying her from 'Misery's stream' to 'Hope's unmeasured height', features of an allegorical landscape which it is hard not to associate with Clifton Hill and the river Avon. Chaos in this poem does not signify the overthrow of Yearsley's faculties, but an innovation in the poetics of patronage. Only once Yearsley's mortal form is dissolved will she be able to offer a proper tribute of her gratitude. Until then, the preliminary poem, despite its obvious polish and continuation of themes from Yearsley's previous work, is dismissed as 'the language faint of an untutor'd mind'.⁴⁰ Yearsley was still not above capitalising on her rural background and autodidactic education in her relationship with patrons.

In her next and last volume of poetry, *The Rural Lyre*, she offers the reader an intriguing reflection on her acquisition and use of this education in what the very title announces as the most learned and difficult poem in her career, 'Remonstrance in the Platonic Shade, Flourishing on an Height'[sic]. Yearsley's interest in Greek philosophy was evident even from her first volume of poems, and her fascination with the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul, inspired several of her more amusing lighter verses. This poem is her first explicit engagement with Plato. The Platonic shade of the title does not refer to the doctrine of the forms and the famous metaphor of the shadows on the wall of the cave, but rather to Plato's academy, which was situated in the

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1.28.

shade of an olive grove outside Athens. This ‘consecrated scene’ where Plato taught and theorized, ‘viewed / The hills of immortality, avow’d / One sole creative energy and felt / Its purest influence’ is contrasted with Yearsley’s own struggle to acquire the classical and philosophical knowledge necessary to her poetry.⁴¹ Once again this is expressed through the metaphor of heights and depths, now divorced entirely from the real-world location of Clifton Hill and characterised as an allegorical landscape. The poem gives the reader a vivid sense of Yearsley’s fierce struggle to attain the height she boasts.

Good heaven! have I not climb’d a height
 So frightful, e’en from comfort so remote
 That had my judgment reel’d, my foot forgot
 Its strenuous print, my inexperienced eye
 The wondrous point in view; or my firm soul
 Made early stubborn, her exalted pride,
 Though of external poor; the stagnant lake
 Of vice beneath, than Cocytus more foul,
 Had oped its wave to swallow me and hide
 My frame forever. This I saw: the year
 Ne’er rip’d the corn, or strew’d the yellow leaf
 But some too feeble maid, who in the morn
 Ascended with me, lost her hold and fell;
 Leaving the glorious plaudit of the wise
 To rough laborious spirits.⁴²

This passage is interesting, since Yearsley’s earlier poems have gone along with the supposed singularity of her circumstances, as a poet arising among the labouring classes, whose life has been overshadowed by other, supposedly singular, tragedies. This poem is the first to raise the intriguing notion that Yearsley might not necessarily be so isolated and that she may have been accompanied on the path of knowledge by others whose physical want and the great struggle of ascent have caused to relinquish their hold and tumble into Yearsley’s lake of

⁴¹ Yearsley, ‘Remonstrance in the Platonic Shade, Flourishing on an Height’ in *Collected Works*, ll.23-5, 28.

⁴² *Ibid.*, ll.68-82.

vice, with the catastrophic loss of reputation and standing that would entail. If these ‘too feeble maids’ are not merely abstract figures, it would be fascinating to learn their identities.

The poem is conscious of the labour and difficulty of acquiring knowledge, a perspective that gives it continuity with the harsh georgic landscape of Clifton Hill. The seemingly effortless soaring that had characterised her poems to Stella is replaced by a taxing and difficult ascent that requires enormous reserves of mental and physical determination to accomplish. Once secure and flourishing on her height, however, Yearsley is able to view the prospects below with a moral and temporal vision that transcends the immediate perceptions of imperial glory that have been a feature of the prospect poem since its inception with Sir John Denham’s ‘Cooper’s Hill’.

From this height
I see the bleating lamb trot o’er the turf
That covers long descended kingdoms: hear
The tiger roar, where tyrants scourg’d mankind:
On roofs of buried palaces remark
The mole rearing her fabric [.]⁴³

This prospect view is quite unlike Thomson’s contented survey of his patrons from the summit of Richmond Hill, or the scientific vision of Richard Jago, with its endorsement of a divinely protected Britain encircled by its fleet. What it most resembles is Adam’s vision from the mountain in the last books of *Paradise Lost*, which, as with this vision, took place across a wide span of time as well as space and witnessed the rise of kingdoms and their fall into dust. Although Eve was not permitted to share this vision, Yearsley claims it with a confidence that can be witnessed growing across the three collections of verse she published. Her initial awed reaction to Hannah More’s own learning is expressed through a Miltonic aesthetic that sees her benefactor as a soaring, angelic figure, but by the time of *The Rural*

⁴³ Ibid., 104-109.

Lyre Yearsley is able to transform the rugged, emotionally fraught georgic environment of Clifton Hill into an allegorical hill of knowledge which she successfully summits. Her perception that all forms of tyranny pass away and are annihilated by time and the inroads of nature precedes Anna Letitia Barbauld's memorable portrait, in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, of the collapse of empire, and her vision of London as an untenanted ruin visited only by tourists from the Americas. Like Barbauld, Yearsley succeeded in writing from a prospect that challenges the easy patriotism and imperial celebration common to the genre; but like Barbauld, whose *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* received the second most vituperous review in the whole of the Romantic period, Yearsley suffered to attain her eminence.

Yearsley's prospect views forsake the scientific surveys of Jago and Thomson in favour of a more personal viewpoint which nonetheless develops across her poetic career into a position of Miltonic authority. Her poetry brings to the previously male-dominated prospect a sense of the inhospitality of the prospect station itself. Clifton Hill is cold, exposed, and surrounded by a landscape that evokes traumatic memories, and while the allegorical hilltop in 'Remonstrance in the Platonic shade' may not be quite so uninviting, the ascent to the prospect requires enormous determination and endurance. This sense of the barrenness and alienation of the prospect view, together with the quest for a poetics that can blend personal reflection with Miltonic authority is shared by Yearsley's contemporary, Charlotte Smith, whose work surveys and reflects upon the ongoing events of the French Revolution.

Charlotte Smith on the Sussex cliffs

Charlotte Smith grew up beside the Sussex cliffs, where she spent the happiest and most productive periods of a troubled life, marred by her marriage and later separation from a husband who would frequently use his rights over her property and children to throw her life into disarray. She uses the visual authority of the cliffs in several of her sonnets, as well as

her longer poems, *The Emigrants* (1793) and *Beachy Head* (1807).⁴⁴ The totalising perspective of the prospect poem, which James Thomson was reliant upon in *The Seasons* for his vision of a harmonious world, is undone in Smith's work by the attention which the poems give to the marginality both of the place and narrator; as Jacqueline Labbe writes, 'Smith extrapolates from a physical margin—the edge of a cliff, the coast—a symbolic alienation from her culture.'⁴⁵ The personal and geographical aspects of this mutual alienation can be seen in two of Smith's sonnets. The expressively titled 'On being cautioned against walking on an headland overlooking the sea, because it was frequented by a lunatic' contains, like Yearsley's portrait of Louisa, a surprising degree of identification.⁴⁶ Labbe again argues that 'as the description of the lunatic progresses, the reader becomes less and less sure of the separate existence of the poet and the lunatic, begins to wonder if the poet herself might be the lunatic.'⁴⁷ It is only in the second line of the sestet, 'I see him more with envy than with fear', that the lunatic is identified as male, and Smith places her relationship to him firmly in the field of visual perspective.⁴⁸

The lunatic challenges the conventions of the prospect poem with his disordered approach to the cliff edge 'with starting pace or slow' and the way that, instead of observing and describing a georgic or pastoral landscape dotted with occasional country seats, he 'measuring, views with wide and hollow eyes' only the vertiginous plunge to the rocks below.⁴⁹ In contrast, Smith's friend and mentor, William Cowper, retained the prospect

⁴⁴ As the publication of *Beachy Head* occurs after my cut-off date of 1800, and the poem is impossible to examine without taking into account the influence of William Wordsworth's poetry on its composition, I restrict myself here to an examination of the sonnets and *The Emigrants*.

⁴⁵ Jacqueline M Labbe, *Charlotte Smith : Romanticism, Poetry, and the Culture of Gender* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2003), p.134.

⁴⁶ Quotations from this and all other poems are taken from Charlotte Smith, *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. by Stuart Curran (New York: New York : Oxford University Press, 1993), Sonnet LXX.

⁴⁷ Jacqueline Labbe, *Romantic Visualities : Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Basingstoke : Macmillan, 1998), p.28.

⁴⁸ Smith, *Poems*, LXX l.10.

⁴⁹ Smith, *Poems*, LXX ll.2-3.

poet's easy command of landscape, a faculty which allowed him to draw the existence of God and the justification for his ethics from close observation of Nature; a Nature that 'lectures man / In heav'nly truth; evincing as she makes / The grand transition, that there lives and works / A soul in all things, and that soul is God.'⁵⁰ In this poem, however, nature's didactic message has collapsed into a fractured and unintelligible dialogue between the pathetic fallacy of the chiding waves and the sighing winds, and the lunatic's 'hoarse, half uttered lamentation [...] murmuring responses to the distant surf.'⁵¹ The narrator's confessed envy for the lunatic who 'seems (uncursed with reason) not to know / The depth or the duration of his woe' presents her own position as worse than madness.⁵² Though Smith possesses powers of expression beyond the lunatic's incoherent murmurs, the fact that neither of them is willing or able to divulge the cause of this melancholia creates an unexpected bond between them. Labbe found that 'as one reads this poem, one begins to wonder—is it simply coincidence that legally, married women were classed with children, criminals and idiots?', and the position both of the lunatic and the narrator at the cliff's edge brings them a new prospect that combines visual authority with an awareness of physical, social and mental precariousness.⁵³

One of the most vehement sonnets in an emotionally unrestrained collection, 'The sea view' embodies the physical marginality of the South Downs, on the edge of the oceanic barrier between the countries of Britain and France. Though published in 1797, four years after *The Emigrants*, at a time when Britain and France were actually at war, it embodies the contradictions of a region of Britain which is peaceful but at the same time, too close to war

⁵⁰ William Cowper, *The Task, and Selected Other Poems*, ed. by James Sambrook (London: Longman, 1994) VI. 182-5.

⁵¹ Smith, *Poems*, LXX ll.7-8.

⁵² Ibid., ll.13-4.

⁵³ Labbe, *Romantic Visualities*, p.28.

for comfort. The pastoral scene of the octet, where a shepherd, resting on the downs, embodies the tranquillity of a timeless rural England, is rudely shattered by the violence of the sestet.

When like dark plague-spots by the Demons shed,
Charged deep with death, upon the waves, far seen,
Move the war-freighted ships; and fierce and red,
Flash their destructive fire—The mangled dead
And dying victims then pollute the flood.
Ah! thus man spoils Heaven's glorious works with blood!⁵⁴

Within the poem, the distant war, which the British were normally insulated from by the strength of their naval blockade in the channel, is made impossible to ignore or avoid, its pollution extending even to the pastoral uplands untouched by strife. The physical marginality of the Sussex coasts forms a space in which the outcast of society can take a privileged visual position otherwise denied them by society, but also where war and bloodshed are impossible for a being of sensibility to ignore.

The context of *The Emigrants* emerges from the kind of refugee crisis which we in the twenty-first century are sadly familiar. The first book of the emigrants begins in November 1792, two months after the murder of many Catholic clerics in the September massacres. This was in many ways a turning point in relations between the two countries. In addition to tainting the French Revolution with a mob massacre, the new flood of emigrants into Britain in the words of the historian Kirsty Carpenter, ‘marked the transition from a situation where Britain was host to a group of independent émigrés to a situation where Britain found herself offering political asylum to refugees of the French Revolution.’⁵⁵ Like many, Charlotte Smith

⁵⁴ Smith, *Poems*, LXXXIII. 9-14.

⁵⁵ Kirsty Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution: Émigrés in London, 1789-1802* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p.30. Carpenter describes the period from September 1792 to April 1793 as ‘a period of flux’. In January, Britain passed the Aliens Act, restricting French immigration, but by April a national charitable campaign for the relief of the emigrants had raised around £70,000—a considerable sum. This goes unmentioned in the second book of *The Emigrants*, set that very same April, which ignores the improving situation for the émigrés already in Britain as it turns to the worsening international outlook.

made room within her house to shelter this sudden influx of exiles, and found her pro-revolutionary views challenged by their stories of near escape from death.⁵⁶ She was inspired to produce a long blank-verse poem that would attempt both to describe and to shape events.

Charlotte Smith's preoccupation with the plight of the exiled French found its parallel in the acts of exile with which *Paradise Lost* begins and ends: Satan's plummet from Heaven and Adam and Eve's exile from Paradise. As Adriana Craciun has noted, '*The Emigrants* is, like *Paradise Lost*, a post-Revolutionary meditation on exile and the poet's allegiance to "liberty".'⁵⁷ Smith attempts Milton's facility of writing from retirement with a public voice, and *Paradise Lost* undergirds the structure and the strategies of vision in *The Emigrants* to a degree far greater than Smith's two direct textual quotations from Milton hint.

Smith makes sure that the readers are aware of the Miltonic notes from the outset by quoting *Paradise Lost* in her dedication to her friend and fellow poet William Cowper, where she praises his poem *The Task* for resembling the angelic conversation of Raphael that so spellbound Adam that he thought him still speaking even when the angel had ceased.⁵⁸ She hints that her own poem will follow a different course, avoiding direct competition with Cowper ('it belongs not to a feeble and feminine hand to draw the bow of Ulysses') by producing a poem which is characterised as a visual sketch, 'a delineation of those interesting objects which happened to excite my attention, and which ever pressed upon an heart that has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others'.⁵⁹ *The Task* is characterised as an aural experience, to which Smith's

⁵⁶ See Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp.191-6.

⁵⁷ Adriana Craciun, 'Romantic Satanism and the Rise of Nineteenth-Century Women's Poetry', *New Literary History*, 34.4 (2003), 699-721, p.700.

⁵⁸ *Paradise Lost* Book VIII. 1-4. Cowper's own relationship with Milton is explored by Dustin Griffin in 'Cowper, Milton, and the Recovery of Paradise', *Essays in Criticism: A Quarterly Journal of Literary Criticism*, 31.1 (1981), 15-26.

⁵⁹ Charlotte Smith, 'To William Cowper, esq.' in *Poems*, p.132.

poem, by contrast will be a visual one. Also introduced in this quotation are the principles of the empathetic survey, wherein Smith's sympathy for the plight of the emigrants she observes and her acknowledgement of their kinship in suffering erodes much of the distanced authority of the prospect view.

The prefatory letter establishes for the reader Smith's sense of her position within English literary culture and a blank verse tradition that continues in the shadow of Milton and Cowper. Stuart Curran has described Smith's use throughout *The Emigrants* of fragments from the poetry of others as a strategy of cultural regrounding, whereby 'Phrases from England's past are thus incorporated within the poem to achieve a present currency. The literary lifeblood of the British spirit is here revived on a contemporary stage.'⁶⁰ Susan Wolfson, meanwhile, considers this strategy as structural, arguing that 'In sequential alternations of sympathy and political review, Smith plots the emotive force of Book I through contradictory impulses, troping male literary traditions to shape the turns.'⁶¹ In this poem, Milton's poetry operates as far more than an empty reference, with Smith often subverting or inverting the meaning of the Miltonic passages she borrows. She is also adept at turning the distinctive aspect of her own blank verse style, the long sentence with the delayed main verb, into a subtle stylistic comment on the frustrations of hope deferred.

The Emigrants begins, like a play, by setting the details of time and place:

SCENE, on the Cliffs to the Eastward of the Town of Brighthelmstone in Sussex.
TIME, a Morning in November, 1792.⁶²

This places the poem's narrator on an eminence that provides her with the visual authority of a prospect poem, but also introduces a hybrid text that contains within it elements of dramatic

⁶⁰ Stuart Curran, 'Charlotte Smith: Intertextualities', in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. by Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), pp. 175–88 (p. 181).

⁶¹ Susan J Wolfson, 'Charlotte Smith's *Emigrants*: Forging Connections at the Borders of a Female Tradition', *Huntington Library Quarterly: Studies in English and American History and Literature*, 63.4 (2000), 509–46 (p. 513).

⁶² Smith, *Poems*, p.135.

monologue and political poetry. It begins with a slow, grey November dawn which finds the narrator already waiting on the edge of the cliff. As in the sonnets, how she first came to be standing there is never addressed, but the strange position at an unusual time of day establishes her outsider status, and her pre-eminence gives her a strong visual authority which Ann Yearsley's staggered third and first person appearances on Clifton Hill lacked.⁶³

The narrator then reflects how many people the new dawn awakes only to fresh sorrows:

For doubts, diseases, abject dread of Death,
And faithless friends, and fame and fortune lost;
Fancied or real wants; and wounded pride,
That views the day star, but to curse his beams.⁶⁴

The characterisation, among these various woes, of 'wounded pride' cursing the sun would have been familiar to readers of *Paradise Lost*. The reference is to Satan's soliloquy on Mount Niphates, in Book IV,

To thee I call
But with no friendly voice, and add thy name
O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy Sphere;
Till pride and worse ambition threw me down (*PL* IV. 35-40)

Invoked here among the passions the narrator imagines among the exiles is the Satanic response, cursing the sun for recalling memories of their happy state before their fall and exile. It forms an apt contrast with Smith's own position on an eminence, where her response to her woes is not Satanic embitterment but compassionate survey. Whereas Satan's bitterest rankle is for his own injured merit, Smith's first concern is for others. Accordingly, the poem is not Satanic, but relates a complex process of negotiation between the violent excesses of

⁶³ Jacqueline Labbe addresses the gendered decorum of Smith's night-time wanderings in *Romanticism, Poetry and the Culture of Gender*, pp.13-4.

⁶⁴ Charlotte Smith, *The Emigrants* in *Poems*, I. 15-18. Further references to this poem will be given parenthetically.

the French Revolution and the corruption of the regime it replaced. Accordingly, this verse paragraph is followed by a single sentence of enormous syntactical complexity sprawling across fifteen lines of blank verse. Its essence can be boiled down to ‘God surely means us nothing but good’, but Smith uses the quintessentially Miltonic strategy of keeping us waiting a very long time for the main verb to echo the patience and fortitude necessary to support the concept of God’s Will making itself manifest in the world. The sentence begins ‘Yet He, whose spirit into being call’d / This wond’rous World of Waters; He who bids / The wild wind lift them till they dash the clouds’ (I.19-20), and continues through a long recital of God’s attributes before returning to the subject and providing a verb ‘He surely means’ (I.29). However, the sentence still keeps us waiting for its resolution with a two-line excursion into the dative case, ‘To us his reasoning Creatures, whom he bids / Acknowledge and rever his awful hand / Nothing but good’ (I.30-2). Outwardly, nothing could be more orthodox than the sentiments here expressed, but the syntactical tortuousness of this sentence and its long deferral of the main verb indicates the long, uncertain wait for such good to emerge. The final part of this extraordinary sentence, meanwhile, is briskly dispatched in two and a half lines. ‘Yet Man, misguided Man, / Mars the fair work that he was bid enjoy / And makes himself the evil he deplores’ (I.32-4). Smith’s distrust of optimistic theodicy is evident here even without the passage in Book II where she admits she would rather worship God alone in the fields than choose to attend church in a congregation.⁶⁵

Recoiling ‘from proud oppression, and from legal crimes’ (I.36), Smith considers a withdrawal to ‘some lone cottage, deep embower’d / In the green woods, that these steep chalky Hills / Guard from the strong South West’ (I.43-5). She turns away from the bleakness

⁶⁵ This preference drew flak from a reviewer in the *British Critic*, who quoted a passage from Samuel Johnson’s *Life of Milton* criticising Milton’s religious observations and recommending regular social worship. Smith would probably have been flattered to be tarred by the same brush.

of the prospect and its exposure to all the ills of human life, to the sheltered Edenic life of the picturesque—or perhaps a better than Edenic life, since it need not be shared with an Adam. Though a high mound here allows the option of a prospect view, it is significantly contrasted with Smith’s current position both spatially—from the mound the sea is ‘Lucid tho’ distant’ (I.53)—and temporally, as she would climb the mound to witness the beauty of the sunset rather than the cold cheerless dawn with which the poem begins. But—as Smith points out through another of those long descriptive sentences with their long-delayed main verbs—no building can shelter the owner from all cares.⁶⁶

Nearly a hundred lines after the poem first began, its subjects, the French émigrés, join the narrator on the cliff’s edge to look out towards France, in the hope of seeing a ship arriving either with news or with more emigrants. As they wait by the cliff’s edge, murmuring despondently like the lunatic Smith wrote of in an earlier sonnet, the narrator surveys them: ‘Methinks in each expressive face, I see / Discriminated anguish’ (I.112-3). Her sympathetic vision goes beyond what the memorial vision of Yearsley, or even the historical-geographical vision of Jago can offer, and allows her to present vivid pen-portraits of the past and present state of the exiled French clerics and their followers, as well as their psychological circumstances. The suspended verb structure previously noted now extends to even greater lengths, where a sentence beginning ‘Even he of milder heart’ (I.169) rolls on for over twenty lines, gathering up the peasantry and parochial priests and remarking on their subjection, before finally the main verb emerges: ‘Even such a man / Becomes an exile’

⁶⁶ An irony worth noting is that this long sentence concludes ‘till the friendly grave / (Our sole secure asylum) “ends the chace.” (I.92-3) Smith’s endnote to this quotation, ‘I have a confused notion that this expression [...] is to be found in Young’ (I.93n) has sent her editors on a wild goose chase of their own throughout the whole poems of Edward Young, only to conclude that the phrase probably originates in an eighteenth-century hunting song. The saga has a striking likeness to William Wordsworth’s own editorially maddening footnote to ‘Lines Written a Few Mile Above Tintern Abbey’: ‘This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young, the exact expression of which I cannot recollect’. See Wordsworth, ‘Tintern Abbey’ in *Lyrical Ballads*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) l.107n.

(I.190-1). The long suspension is especially appropriate here, embodying the uncertainty and turmoil of the exile's future, and corresponds neatly to a poem where the fortunate reversal, the restoration of what was lost, is fated never to come. Hence, when it emerges, the long-awaited verb falls with the weight of inevitability rather than springing one of the syntactic surprises Milton's style is known for.

Smith's next Miltonic reference is the only acknowledged allusion to *Paradise Lost* within the poem. Criticising the nobility and their presumption of superiority over those of baser birth, Smith parenthetically attacks 'Heraldry (that with fantastic hand/ Mingles, like images in feverish dreams, / "Gorgons and Hydras and Chimeras dire",)' (I.254-6). The Miltonic context of the quote, which describes the landscape of Hell as a place of unnatural generation where 'nature breeds / Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things [...] Gorgons and Hydras and Chimeras dire' (II.624-8) fits beautifully with Smith's own critique of the unnatural and corrupted taste that prizes the artificial distinctions of aristocracy over real worth. It also leads into Smith's rewriting of one of the most famous epic similes in *Paradise Lost*.

In Book IX, when Satan first sees Eve alone, immediately before he tempts her with the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge, Milton tells us that his feelings may be compared to a city-dweller venturing out into the countryside:

As one who long in populous city pent
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
Forth issuing on a summer's morn to breathe
Among the pleasant villages and farms
Adjoined, from each thing met conceives delight,
The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
Or dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound;
If chance with nymph-like step fair virgin pass,
What pleasing seemed, for her now pleases more,
She most, and in her look sums all delight. (*PL IX*. 445-54)

As the city-dweller is refreshed and disarmed by the change of scene from the hellish atmosphere of the city to the invigorating air of the countryside, so Eve's appearance

provokes a reaction so strong that for a moment it disarms Satan entirely of his ill-intent, in perhaps the last occasion in *Paradise Lost* when Satan evokes our sympathy.

Her graceful innocence, her every air
Of gesture or least action overawed
His malice, and with rapine sweet bereaved
His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
That space the evil one abstracted stood
From his own evil, and for the time remained
Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed (*PL IX. 459-65*)

Satan is neither a boor nor a philistine, and his ability to appreciate and be moved by the beauty of Eve and Eden before he commits himself irrevocably to their destruction is one of Milton's great successes in introducing a human element into a superhuman character, and thus providing his epic poem with psychological insight as well as sublimity.

Smith's own similes, however, allow no such moment of natural taste to flash through the façade of her urbanite nobility. In her poem, the meaning of Milton's simile is reversed.

As one, who long
Has dwelt amid the artificial scenes
Of populous City, deems that splendid shows,
The Theatre, and pageant pomp of Courts,
Are only worth regard; forgets all taste
For Nature's genuine beauty; in the lapse
Of gushing waters hears no soothing sound,
Nor listens with delight to sighing winds. (*I. 260-7*)

The taste of Smith's city dweller is so corrupted that they are unable to relish the natural world at all, and this lack of any relish in nature finds a counterpart in their disrelish for liberty, having been long lulled by luxury into unconsciousness of their servile condition under a tyrannous and despotic government:

so to *his* mind,
That long has liv'd where Despotism hides
His features harsh, beneath the diadem
Of worldly grandeur, abject slavery seems,
If by that power impos'd, slavery no more (*I.273-7*)

The italics Smith places around '*his*' to mark the transition to the second part of the simile is badly needed, for the ideals of rural liberty and urban despotism are so closely yoked that the

two different persons referred to in the simile's two parts might otherwise have become combined by an unwary reader.⁶⁷ By abandoning the moment of psychological crisis Milton wrote into his simile, and dissipating its potential for the suspension of evil, Smith presents the French nobility as full of Satan's flaws without any of his glamour or sublimity. Despite their visually commanding height, the emigrants are not splendid, and their confrontation with nature does not lead them to a reformation or reconsideration of their position, but only an endless nostalgia for what they have lost.

The second book of the poem is set six months later on an afternoon in April 1793 and though it does not turn entirely away from the prospect, the visual character of the scene is less marked. Instead of the cliffs east of Brighton, the scene here has changed to 'an Eminence on one of those Downs, which afford to the South a View of the Sea; to the North of the Weald of Sussex' (p.149). This is a much vaguer location than that of the first book, but it sounds suspiciously similar to the high mound with a view of the sea beside the lone cottage which Smith was pining for in Book I. Michael Wiley identifies the location as somewhere roughly twenty miles west of Brighton, on the River Arun, where Smith spent some of the happier days of her childhood. He notes that 'While Smith does not explain the cause for a change in location, her new position in a place that has sustained past happiness perhaps enables her to sketch a map of a future happiness'.⁶⁸ I would also submit that the change of scene represents a covert means to retire to a less exposed and more home-like position without surrendering the visual authority of her striking stance in Book I. Smith's

⁶⁷ These two similes from Milton and Smith are lengthy, involved, and difficult to present in an abbreviated form. Susan J Wolfson has examined the presence of this simile at length in previous eighteenth-century blank verse poetry, as well as in *The Emigrants*, but her quotation from *Paradise Lost* elides Satan's moment of hesitation before committing to his course: see 'Charlotte Smith's Emigrants: Forging Connections at the Borders of a Female Tradition', *Huntington Library Quarterly: Studies in English and American History and Literature*, 63.4 (2000), 509–46, (pp.531-3).

⁶⁸ Michael Wiley, 'The Geography of Displacement and Replacement in Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants*', *European Romantic Review*, 17.1 (2006), 55–68, (p.67 n.13).

description of how ‘Pensive I took my solitary way’ along the cliff six months previously aligns her with Adam and Eve, the original exiles, who ‘hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow / Through Eden took their solitary way’ (*PL* XII. 648-9). This new scene on a spring afternoon inland is more Edenic than the bleak coastline of the first book, but the balm of nature, ‘The beauteous works of God, unspoil’d by Man’ (II.56) which Smith had thought might lull her away from human cares, fails to effect its promised transition to merely pastoral concerns, as Smith complains: ‘my soul / Feels not the joy reviving Nature brings; / But in dark retrospect, dejected dwells / On human follies, and on human woes’ (II.39-42). Though her new location offers her less of a visual field, Smith’s affective survey maintains its efficacy even in a more retired situation. In the lines that follow, Smith vividly describes the horrors of war, comments on the suffering of the French royal family and regrets the plight of the rural poor, covering a truly Cowperian range of subjects.

The eminences mentioned in these books are dangerous places. The metaphorical eminence of high society is embodied in the figure of Marie Antoinette, for who ‘eminence / Of misery is thine, as once of joy’ (II.173-4), while her son Louis, the heir presumptive, would have been better off living as a peasant boy than facing his present miserable circumstances. Visibility offers the mourning Queen no agency, and her stature is no consolation to her after her husband’s death, as she awaits her own execution. The mirror image of the Queen and her son is found in the woman and child, last survivors of a squadron of exiles, who flee ‘To a wild mountain, whose bare summit hides / Its broken eminence in clouds’ (II.254-5). The sanctuary from their pursuers which the mountain offers them, however, proves illusory when a storm sweeps in, mingling within it the catastrophes of war and nature. Thunder mingles with the sound of the cannon—the screaming wind bears the death-cries of their fellows—and the glowing shrapnel of the exploding bomb is likened to ‘scattered comets’ (II.278). Nature here offers no consolation, but mirrors and accentuates the

horrors of war. The mother and child perish, and whether they do so from exposure or from the depredations of the wolves who have been lured in from wilder regions by the promise of carrion is left ambiguous. Like Marie Antoinette's metaphorical eminence, the physical eminence here offers no command or solace, no privileged vision of what occurs—only bleak exposure to the perils of the elements.

After this brutally Hobbesian vision of nature, the poem returns again to the Sussex setting which Smith's vivid recounting of the sorrows of the French has all but dislodged from the reader's mind. Unlike Yearsley, for whom memory seemed merely to reveal a prospect of many sorrows, Smith is sustained by her recollection of her childhood on the banks of Arun and the kindlier vision of nature she experienced there. Childhood, for her, is a separate realm of memory that stands in opposition both to the ravages of the war in France and Smith's own struggle to raise her children and preserve her inheritance. The Miltonic endurance with which she bears these reverses is appropriately highlighted by a borrowed Miltonic phrase, 'Right onward', which Smith flags as a deliberate reference to Milton's XXII sonnet. Addressed, like the preceding sonnet, to his friend Cyriac Skinner, the sonnet describes Milton's blindness before declaring,

Yet I argue not
Against Heav'n's hand or will, not bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe talks from side to side.⁶⁹

Smith takes upon herself the same public commitment, the same resolution to defend liberty, as Milton—she declares herself 'a calm votary of the nymph / Who, from her adamantine rock, points out / To conscious rectitude the rugged path, / That leads at length to Peace!'

⁶⁹ John Milton, 'Sonnet XXII' in *Complete Works Vol. III*, ll.6-12.

(II.368-71) The acquisition of this public voice—Smith’s attempt, from retirement, to project herself upon the public stage—has been the poem’s task.

One further prospect awaits: attempting to preclude attacks upon her irregular religious observations, which are more often conducted alone in nature rather than ‘in domes / Of human architecture, fill’d with crowds’ (II.390-1), Smith summons up a bird’s eye view of the Sussex downs thriving beneath God’s hand,

on these hills, where boundless, yet distinct,
Even as a map, beneath are spread the fields
His bounty cloaths; divided here by woods
And there by commons rude, or winding brooks,
While I might breathe the air perfum’d with flowers,
Or the fresh odours of the mountain turf (II.392-7)

The focus here is not on manmade divisions such as walls, fences and county boundaries, but on the natural divisions between commons and woods: as Michael Wiley notes, ‘this map replaces standard cartographic dividing lines, which demonstrate institutional power over humans and nature, with a naturalized alternative.’⁷⁰ Smith’s natural boundaries succeed in shifting the prospect away from the hierarchical vision of the eighteenth-century prospect poet, with its emphasis on the bodies of historical, geological and geographical knowledge the learned author possesses, and its regular roll-call of country-houses and scenes of industry. Although *The Emigrants* calls upon the body of previous literature for its authority, that authority is not used to shore up the old visual command of the prospect poet, but to inaugurate a new aesthetics whereby the powers of sympathy can extend the survey beyond the merely visual—where a public voice can issue moral reflections from retirement, and a woman’s comments on the politics of the time may be as trenchant as any.

Conclusion

⁷⁰ Wiley, *Geography of Displacement*, p.55

Ann Yearsley and Charlotte Smith both bring new perspectives to the stale and moribund sub-genre of the prospect poem, placing themselves on hilltops they have vivid personal experience of, and putting their visual authority to purposes quite different to the scientific, descriptive and historical survey that was standard at the time.

Yearsley's 'Clifton Hill' unfolds as an alternative to the Miltonic poetics of patronage which she used in her first volume of poetry to characterise the difference between her self-taught poetry and the angelic soaring of her educated patron, Hannah More. The wintry conditions and harsh georgic landscape Yearsley portrays are further troubled by the loss of Yearsley's mother and the madness of Louisa, episodes described in language that draws on a fall into the depths and an interior Chaos similar to the Chaos Milton describes. It is heartening, then, to see Yearsley's use of the prospect develop across her three volumes of verse into the allegorical hill of knowledge described in 'Remonstrance in the Platonic Shade, Flourishing on an Height'. In that poem, despite the difficulties of ascent, Yearsley is privy to a temporal and spatial breadth of vision which recalls that of Adam from the mountain in Eden, and from which Eve and her daughters had previously been excluded.

Charlotte Smith's own prospect from the cliffs near Brighton is likewise used not to harmonise a landscape but to evoke the marginality both of the narrator and the emigrants, whose troubles she narrates through the power of the empathic survey. In France, as described in the second book, eminence brings on more woes not only for Marie Antoinette, but also for the émigré mother and child who meet their deaths on the barren mountainside. Smith repeatedly references Milton's Satan in her description of the less sympathetic emigrants, but undercuts the allusion by denying them the full force of Satan's charisma and psychological complexity. The poem ends with Smith taking up the responsibility of a Miltonic public voice in the cause of securing peace between France and Britain.

The scope for personal and emotional reflection Yearsley and Smith found within the prospect poem would have consequences for the development of the Romantic landscape poem, and both women succeeded in finding strong public voices in this otherwise male-dominated verse sub-genre. There would be more women to follow them as the nineteenth century dawned.

Coda: The Road to Wordsworth

All roads lead to Wordsworth. He is the next waypoint in our internal maps of English Literature, at the point where the debatable borderlands of late eighteenth-century poetry must finally give way to the celebrated territory of Romanticism. The influence of the poetry of the eighteenth century on Wordsworth's verse has often been downplayed, not least by Wordsworth himself, who discounted the influence of any poet later than Milton on his work. Despite his declaration, 'that there were four English poets whom I must continually have before me as examples—Chaucer, Shakspeare, Spenser and Milton. These I must study and equal *if I could*; and I need not think of the rest', Wordsworth was nowhere near so elitist as he suggests in his consumption of English poetry in general.¹ If Harold Bloom's account of 'the hidden roads that go from poem to poem' privileges the connections made between the strong poets, (the big transport hubs of literature, to stretch the metaphor a little further), this study has proceeded on the basis that there is something to be gained in exploring the relatively little known back-roads and by-ways of eighteenth-century poetry.² An examination of how eighteenth century authors chose to react to and develop Milton's cosmographic scale allows us not only to trace what they made of the Miltonic inheritance, but to inquire which parts of this inheritance were accepted or rejected by Wordsworth himself in his development as a poet. Few poets have a more intimately allusive relationship than Wordsworth and Milton, but Wordsworth also wrote the lines, 'Sweet is the lore which

¹ William Wordsworth, quoted in *The Romantics on Milton*, ed. Joseph Wittreich, (Cleveland; London: The press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970), p.135. For more pointed accounts by William Hazlitt and Thomas Carlyle of Wordsworth praising his own poetry at Milton's expense, see pp.199, 140.

² Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, p. 96.

Nature brings; / Our meddling intellect / Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: / We murder to dissect', and was content to drink 'confusion to Mathematics' with John Keats.³ How did he react to the eighteenth-century project of updating Milton's astronomy and geography into the Age of Enlightenment? If he would not draw on eighteenth-century science, then how did his own poetry confront the challenge posed by Milton's cosmographic scale?

His solution, as I shall show, was two-fold. Around his home in Grasmere in the Lake District, he created a new type of poetic chorography, impregnating local objects with personal and emotional, rather than historical and antiquarian, significance. Meanwhile, in *The Prelude*, *The Excursion* and in the uncompleted *Recluse*, which sought to incorporate and extend the accomplishments of the two former poems, Wordsworth explored the mind of man, and laid claim to an inner cosmography vaster than Milton's own scope.

We have numerical evidence of Wordsworth's obsession with Milton: in Edwin Stein's study of a corpus of 280 pieces of Wordsworth's poetry, Milton received by far the largest share of 1,300 identified echoes and allusions, with 550 instances—more than five times the figure for the next most echoed writer, Shakespeare. Comparatively, an allusion to Thomson is identifiable in thirty-five instances, and to John Dyer in ten-to-twenty places.⁴ The overwhelming preponderance of Miltonic reference is striking, and it can be felt throughout Wordsworth's work that Milton is an immediate presence, regularly borne in mind. There is rarely a sense of the relationship between these two poets being mediated by the use of Milton in eighteenth-century blank verse, and Stein characterises even the major

³ Wordsworth, 'The Tables Turned' in *The Works of William Wordsworth* (Ware: Wordsworth Poetry Library, 1994), ll.24-8; Andrew Motion, *Keats*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), p.219.

⁴ Edwin Stein, *Wordsworth's Art of Allusion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), p.10. Stein is not specific about the exact number of references to Dyer he has identified, categorising him among a wider range of poets to whom Wordsworth has alluded to ten to twenty times.

eighteenth-century writers as being 'subsumed into the glancingly reminiscent, collegial, yet self-distancing and evolutionary relationship that Wordsworth had with the eighteenth century.'⁵

Given this apparent distance, it remains to be asked how far Wordsworth's poetic chorography of Grasmere draws upon the chorographies of Philips and Dyer. John Philips's poetry appears to have left no textual trace in Wordsworth's writing, but J.C. Pellicer has pointed to Philips's career as a model for Wordsworth's own cultivation of his provincial background as a subject for poetry. 'The line between Philips and Wordsworth is not direct, but through Philips's widespread influence it is unbroken', Pellicer writes, and Philips's pioneering work in popularising Miltonic blank verse, developing an English georgic style, and creating a provincial model of authorship prepares the way for Wordsworth's emergence.⁶

The presence of that unbroken line in Wordsworth's poetry is best displayed in fellow georgic poet John Dyer, who, like the author of *Paradise Lost*, has the honour of being addressed in one of Wordsworth's sonnets.

Bard of the Fleece, whose skilful genius made
That work a living landscape fair and bright;
Nor hallowed less with musical delight
Than those soft scenes through which thy childhood strayed,
Those southern tracts of Cambria, "deep embayed,
With green hills fenced, with ocean's murmur lulled;"
Though hasty Fame hath many a chaplet culled
For worthless brows, while in the pensive shade
Of cold neglect she leaves thy head ungraced,
Yet pure and powerful minds, hearts meek and still,
A grateful few, shall love thy modest Lay,
Long as the shepherd's bleating flock shall stray
O'er naked Snowdon's wide aerial waste;
Long as the thrush shall pipe on Grongar Hill!⁷

⁵ Stein, *Wordsworth's Art of Allusion*, p. 14.

⁶ Pellicer, 'Life, Works, Reception', p.100.

⁷ William Wordsworth, 'To the Poet, John Dyer' in *The Works of William Wordsworth*, p.254.

In praising Dyer, Wordsworth also praises his own critical taste, and the poem gives its author the distinction of being one of Dyer's 'grateful few', the fit audience of a poet whose works will never achieve the same popularity and critical exaltation as those of Milton. For Wordsworth, Dyer has the charm of exclusivity, of a discovery somewhat out of the common way. The sonnet is also remarkable in the degree to which Wordsworth accentuates the provincial, pastoral theme in Dyer and at the cost of the wider commercial geography described in works like *The Fleece*. The 'living landscape' of the sonnet is wholly Welsh, wholly omitting Dyer's description of English pastures, northern manufactures, and the wool trade in Europe and beyond. The territory of *The Fleece*, mentioned in the sonnet's first line, is selectively remapped onto the terrain of Dyer's early topographical poem, 'Grongar Hill', mentioned in the last line. If the poem claims Dyer as a Welsh writer, it also draws out Wordsworth's own preferred themes of childhood, nature and provincial retirement at the expense of Dyer's enthusiasm for travel, trade and industry, returning the global ambitions of *The Fleece* to a strictly chorographic scale.

An early biographical anecdote of Wordsworth reading James Thomson in his boyhood has perhaps unduly limited our ideas of how the two poets relate to one another.

Before the morning hour of repairing to school, he has been often seen and heard in the sequestered lane, either alone, or with a favoured companion, repeating aloud beautiful passages from Thomson's Seasons, and sometimes comparing, as they chanced to occur, the actual phenomena of nature with those given of them by the poet.⁸

This charming story has hardened into a critical commonplace: Thomson's influence on Wordsworth is felt in the realm of close natural description. It is an easy conclusion to come to: both poets were highly celebrated for this aspect of their work. Wordsworth's strongest

⁸ Anon., 'Memoir of William Wordsworth, Esq.' quoted in *Wordsworth's Poets*, ed. by Duncan Wu (Manchester: Carcanet, 2003), p. 52.

endorsements and most enduring criticisms of Thomson concern natural description, and the suitability of the poet's language for conveying it.⁹ The difference between their descriptions of a wider landscape and their strategies of viewing it is relatively neglected, which is why I here wish to compare two texts not, to my knowledge, brought together before: the hydrological passage from Thomson's *Autumn*, discussed at the end of Chapter 2, and Wordsworth's 1816 lyric, 'To —— on her first ascent of Helvellyn'.

At first sight, Thomson's sublime blank verse survey and Wordsworth's occasional lyric, apparently written to celebrate the ascent of Helvellyn by a Miss Blackett, have little in common. Wordsworth poem opens with the lady 'Awed, delighted and amazed' at the prospect from Helvellyn's summit.¹⁰ Later, the poem expands beyond a prospect into an excursion: with the lines 'Maiden, now take flight, inherit / Alps or Andes—they are thine! / With the morning's roseate spirit / Sweep their length of snowy line', Wordsworth's poem converts the lady's elation at summiting the peak into a survey of the mountains of the world.¹¹ This recalls Thomson's description of the 'radiant Line' of the Andes, and the sudden transformation of Wordsworth's poem from local prospect to global panorama parallels Thomson's similar panorama of mountains in *Autumn*.¹² The differences between the two poets' approaches are instructive. Thomson's survey had energy and scope, but it was driven by a scientific, hydrographic vision which dissected the mountains to uncover the workings of the water cycle within them. This scientific language lent his verse authority, but occasionally meant that the poem was bogged down in the description 'Of mingled moulds, of more retentive earths, / The guttered rocks and mazy-running clefts' (*Autumn*, 815-6). The

⁹ For a full list of these criticisms and endorsements, together with an interesting recent discussion of Wordsworth's relationship to Thomson, see Tess Somervell, 'Mediating Vision: Wordsworth's Allusions to Thomson's Seasons in The Prelude', *Romanticism*, 22: 1 (2016), 48–60.

¹⁰ William Wordsworth, 'To —— on her first ascent to the summit of Helvellyn' in *The Works*, 1.4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ll.17-20.

¹² James Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), *Autumn*, l.769.

rapture of the lady in Wordsworth's poem has no such need for scientific details, expanding purely through imagination and elation. While Wordsworth's poem follows Thomson's survey in its flight along the lines of Alps and Andes, the poem also expands beyond Thomson's temporal and spatial limitations to take in 'the untrodden Lunar mountains' (27) and 'Niphates' top [...] whither spiteful Satan steered' (29-30). By retreading the path of Thomson's survey of the mountains of the world and expanding beyond it, Wordsworth implicitly comments on the limitations of the scientific vision his precursor espoused. In its place, he substitutes a powerful imaginative vision democratically accessible to anyone able to climb a mountain.

The influence of women poets on Wordsworth's writing is harder to trace, thanks at least in part to their critical neglect. We know from Wordsworth's own account that Elizabeth Carter's 'Ode to Spring' was among the first poems to give him any enjoyment or sense of the possibilities of the form, a fact which shows his familiarity with the earlier poet despite the awkward problem that Carter never actually wrote an Ode to Spring.¹³ On the other hand, despite vast new interest in Anna Letitia Barbauld, the extent of her influence upon the Wordsworth circle remains somewhat occluded. Wordsworth and Coleridge expressed admiration for her during their development as poets, and took care to send her a copy of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Later in their careers, thanks partly to professional jealousy and partly to political differences, their attitude towards her hardened into disregard, and their derogatory remarks are recorded in Wordsworth's table talk and Coleridge's lectures.¹⁴

¹³ Various other possibilities for the poem's identity have been floated: see Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Poets* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2003), p.35; and William McCarthy, *Voice of the Enlightenment*, p.451.

¹⁴ See William McCarthy, *Voice of the Enlightenment*, pp. 445–52.

Wordsworth's occasional borrowings from her in his early poetry, and his late endorsement of a stanza from one of her posthumous poems, do not reveal any extensive influence.¹⁵

At this point in the development of Wordsworth Studies, it seems that the strongest female poetic influence on Wordsworth's development is Charlotte Smith. The impact of Smith's *Elegaic Sonnets* and *The Emigrants* upon Wordsworth's poetry has been subject to vigorous critical enquiry as part of her feminist rediscovery, and Jacqueline Labbe in particular has analysed the ways in which Wordsworth used and developed Smith's strategy of intermingling landscape, emotion and memory.¹⁶ Labbe's work reads *The Emigrants* as a fore-runner of 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', her analysis of Smith's later landscape poem *Beachy Head* sees Smith adapting in turn to the innovations Wordsworth brought to landscape poetry. If Wordsworth thought that English Literature was under 'greater obligations than are likely to be either acknowledged or remembered' when it came to the poetry of Charlotte Smith, recent criticism and the widening of the Romantic canon has gone a great way towards both acknowledgement and remembrance.¹⁷

If Wordsworth's closest eighteenth-century sympathies seem to be with the Carmarthenshire poet John Dyer and the Sussex poet Charlotte Smith, this is undoubtedly due to his own lifelong association with the Lake District and its omnipresence in his poetry. Wordsworth's fresh approach is perhaps best seen in the group of five *Poems on the Naming*

¹⁵ Again, see William McCarthy, *Voice of the Enlightenment*, pp. 445–52. For an interesting account of Barbauld's influence on a manuscript draft of Wordsworth's 'The Thorn', see Damian Walford Davies, "'A Tongue in Every Star': Wordsworth and Mrs Barbauld's 'A Summer Evening's Meditation'", *Notes and Queries*, 43 (1996), 29–30

¹⁶ See her trio of books, Jacqueline Labbe, *Writing Romanticism: Charlotte Smith and William Wordsworth, 1784-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Labbe, *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); Labbe, *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, Poetry, and the Culture of Gender* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

¹⁷ William Wordsworth, footnote to 'Stanzas Suggested in a Steamboat off Saint Bee's Head, on the Coast of Cumberland', quoted in Jacqueline M Labbe, *Writing Romanticism: Charlotte Smith and William Wordsworth, 1784-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.5.

of Places, first added to later editions of *Lyrical Ballads*, which sketch out a new type of chorography, embodying Wordsworth's new perspective on the kind of verse landscapes described by Dyer and Smith. They map out a series of places around Grasmere not defined by their historical, geological or antiquarian interest, but by the memories and associations they hold for Wordsworth and his immediate circle, which 'have given to such places a private and peculiar interest'. The first of these poems records Wordsworth's exploration of a brook on an April morning and his discovery of a pleasing dell, whereupon the poet thinks to himself: "Our thoughts at least are ours; and this wild nook, / My EMMA, I will dedicate to thee."¹⁸ Though, unlike the narrator of the prospect poem with its aristocratic perspective on the landscape, Wordsworth has no claim to ownership of the territory he surveys, the freedom of his thought allows him to name the grove, and later to use it as 'my other home / My dwelling and my out-of-doors abode' (40-1). Though the poem allows that the name 'Emma's Dell' is used by local shepherds who are beyond the limits of the Wordsworth coterie, the extent of its use is carefully marked by the poet as limited and conditional, the antithesis of cartography's topographic role in fixing and standardising place names.

The idea of a private chorography developed in the *Poems on the Naming of Places* finds a broader expression in *Home at Grasmere*, the first book of Wordsworth's unfinished magnum opus, *The Recluse*. Here Wordsworth's wish for a chorography of communal sympathies is brought strikingly into juxtaposition with his ambitions for an epic, cosmographic scale. The first part of the work describes the ideal rural community that Wordsworth finds in Grasmere, and the impact of that community not only in shaping the landscape but in providing it with human associations.

Look where we will, some human hand has been
 Before us with its offering; not a tree
 Sprinkles these little pastures, but the same

¹⁸ William Wordsworth, 'It was an April Morning' in *The Works*, ll.38-9.

Hath furnished matter for a thought; perchance
For some one serves as a familiar friend.
Joy spreads, and sorrow spreads; and this whole Vale,
Home of untutored shepherds as it is,
Swarms with sensation, as with gleams of sunshine,
Shadows or breezes, scents or sounds.¹⁹

The realisation that the personal chorography the poet described in *Poems on the Naming of Places* intersects with and overlaps the chorographies of the other inhabitants of Grasmere places apparently simple objects in a vast nexus of pleasant or mournful memories and sensations. As with Philips's use of the microscope to embody the georgic perspective, which finds more matters of interest the closer it inquires, Wordsworth's 'sympathetic microscope', as we might call it, discovers a rich nexus of thought and emotion in apparently banal natural objects. However, where Philips framed his perspective in opposition to Milton's cosmographic scope, depicting Milton on an exposed eminence while the poet of *Cyder* is content to wander the pleasant plains beneath, Wordsworth claims, in the conclusion to the *Recluse* manuscript, that his project's ambitions exceed and surpass Milton's own.

For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.
All strength, all terror, single or in bands,
That ever was put forth in personal form—
Jehovah, with his thunder, and the choir
Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—
I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
Nor aught of blinder vacancy scooped out
By help of dreams can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man,
My haunt, and the main region of my song.²⁰

¹⁹ William Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere: Part First, Book First of The Recluse*, ed. by Beth Darlington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 78.

²⁰ Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere*, p.103.

With these lines Wordsworth completes and transcends the eighteenth-century project of remapping Milton onto chorographic and geographic models by internalising Milton's vast cosmology as a model of the extent and power of our own minds, replacing a spatial with a psychological sublime.

It would be tempting to conclude on this note, but it would also be unfair to the authors this thesis has spent so much time examining. Wordsworth's poetic achievement is undoubtedly great, but to see him as the teleological end-point of eighteenth-century engagement with Milton's work is to do violence to the integrity of each author's own take on the Miltonic legacy. In the development of Wordsworth's poetry Philips, Dyer, Thomson, Barbauld and Smith have undoubtedly their part, alongside many others, but the last thing I would wish to do would be to define the importance of these writers solely by that contribution. Such an analysis would reinstate a binary division between minor and major poets to which I no longer give credence.

Two outstanding doctoral theses, on writers at either end of my chronological range, are vocal in their defence of 'minor' or 'silver' poets. J. C. Pellicer describes his research as 'the result of an attempt to render myself fit, or partially literate, on Philips's own terms'.²¹ There is no danger here of belittling Philips's poetic achievement, only a humbling sense of how much Philips expected from his contemporary audience and how ill-equipped modern literary critics are to grasp the Latinate Virgilian mind-set and grasp of contemporary context Philips sought in his readers. Equally forthright in its championship of an overlooked writer, Brent Raycroft's thesis on Charlotte Smith's influence on Romanticism was submitted in 1994, on the cusp of Smith's feminist rehabilitation and incorporation into the canon. Perceptively, Raycroft remarks that,

²¹ Pellicer, 'Life, Works. and Reception', p.6.

Once established, the label “minor” limits not only canonical status, but also the scope of criticism. [...] The influence of minor authors is attributed to the eccentricity or prematurity of their work, while the influence of major authors is attributed to the strength and fullness of their achievement.²²

Like Raycroft, rather than condescending to the eccentricity or prematurity of the works here examined, I have tried throughout to capture a sense of the conceptual and poetic difficulties faced by eighteenth-century writers who wrote under the influence of Milton, and the ingeniousness and creativity of their solutions. These have included John Philips’s remapping of Milton’s War in Heaven onto the English Civil War, with Herefordshire in the part of Abdiel; John Dyer’s redeployment of Milton’s naval similes and early pastorals in the service of a commercial geography with a rural idyll at its heart; and the various Miltonic perspectives Thomson adopts in his portrayal of providence at work in nature across the globe. Using Milton as a means to speak with a public voice from the private sphere, Rowe, Carter and Barbauld sought to reconcile a devotional universe drawn from *Paradise Lost* with the emerging Newtonian cosmology, while Yearsley and Smith used Miltonic visual authority to lay claim to the traditions of the male-dominated prospect poem. Even the opera, stage and novel adaptations of *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle*, the most neglected and critically denigrated texts here considered, embody creative solutions to the problem of remapping the masque’s specific time and place onto new performance contexts. They are part of a theatrical tradition that stretches from the 1730s into the nineteenth century, entirely independent of reflected glamour from an association with William Wordsworth. They are also part of a wider engagement with Miltonic poetry, and an effort to bring Miltonic settings and machinery into harmony with Enlightenment ideas of space and place. There is room for them all on our maps of the era.

²² Brent Raycroft, ‘Charlotte Smith and Early British Romanticism: Her Writing, Her Critics, Her Influence’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Dalhousie University, 1994), p.20.

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