

Gábor Ittzés

TIME IN MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST*

Narration is a temporal phenomenon. The truth value of that statement is so obvious that we often forget about it yet it is true in two significant ways. First, the act of narration takes place in time; as a printed text extends over lines and pages, so speech extends over seconds, minutes or hours, words follow each other along the linear scale of time. The fact that writing transforms the one-dimensional temporality of speech into the three-dimensional spatial reality of books bears indeed witness to the ingenuity of that device. Reading i.e. converting printed words back into [mentally] spoken ones, however, will happen in time again. Second, *what* is narrated, a sequence of events, happens in time. As Dr. Johnson says in his essay on Milton,

History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, must animate by dramatic energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation.
(1779:703)

Words like *history*, *retrospection*, and *anticipation* indicate how much narration is bound up in time.

This, of course, ought hardly to be astonishing. Time is a basic dimension of human experience, even human existence, and as such it is a limit to them. Whichever way we talk about life, our definition will by necessity include the notion of change which can only make sense in time. Changelessness means precisely invariability *in time*. The projection of the timeless is possible as a logical enterprise, but it will have to be based on a negation, the negation of time, and will therefore not take us very far. The realm of the timeless cannot

incorporate changes, but the idea of changelessness, as I have said above, is still bound up with time.

Not only narration but language in general is a phenomenon within time, and as *finitum non capax infiniti*, timelessness cannot be confined within the limits of language. Catherine Belsey makes essentially the same point when she says, speaking of God, who is eternal, that "at the heart of the project there lies impossibility. Whatever words are invoked to define him, God cannot be contained there" (1988:38-39). We may talk of, but certainly cannot coherently talk about, timelessness. Eternity i.e. timelessness is, then, a limit to both logic and language.

I believe it is not entirely needless and superfluous to briefly re-assert the above trivia in order to appreciate Milton's difficulty in writing *Paradise Lost*. Given that he wants to deal with this particular subject, he has to write about God and eternity, which is in itself a paradox. Moreover, he has to write about the heavenly kingdom and the visible world, i.e. eternal and temporal, *at the same time*. [Note how much my language is inseparable from time.] He has to create a logical structure that can serve as a framework to carry out his design: another impossible task.

In order that we can speak of 'Milton's solution,' though without a desire to enter into the debate on authorial intention, we first have to find evidence that he was at all aware of the difficulties he had to overcome. It should not surprise us to find that he was. There are numerous instances where Milton makes obvious references or even expressly calls attention to the impossibility of narrating heavenly events in human language.

Raphael faces the same problem when he tells Adam the stories of Satan's fall and of Creation. Trying to describe the duel between Michael and Lucifer, he says,

They ended parle, and both addressed for fight
 Unspeakable; for who, though with the tongue
 Of angels can relate, or to what things
 Liken on Earth conspicuous, that may lift
 Human imagination to such height

Of godlike power.

(VI.297-302)¹

This or the often used "to set forth/Great things by small" (VI.310) interjections, usually followed by a simile of cosmic scale, have, naturally, a function to underline the greatness of the events narrated and thereby demonstrate that *Paradise Lost* does qualify for an epic which must, at least according to seventeenth-century literary theory, deal with a subject matter of immense importance. Milton, however, does not simply magnify things on the earthly scale but puts emphasis on the quantitative difference between the visible world and the heavenly realm. In the passage above *human imagination* and *things on earth* on the one hand are juxtaposed with *tongue of angels* and *godlike power* on the other. Moreover, whatever we think of Milton's language and poetic achievement, his poetry, at least technically speaking, is not written in "the tongue of angels" but in fallen human language, and the permissive *though* unmistakably stresses the difference. To express, therefore, the difficulty of description for Raphael is just another instance of "set[ting] forth/Great things by small."

It might be objected to my last example that although it acknowledges the linguistic problems of talking about Heaven, it does not prove that Milton saw the question posed by time. Michael, cutting short his story of Israel's conquering the Promised Land in Book XII, says that "The rest/Were long to tell" (260-1). Incidentally, his words represent an almost verbatim repetition of Satan's excuse to the other fallen angels not to enlarge on the particulars of his expedition through Chaos into the new world: "Long were to tell/What I have done" (X.469-70). Speech requires time, and this is a difficulty. It is true that neither example is taken from the prelapsarian world, and Raphael and Adam, though not unaware, yet never were 'afraid' of time in their dialogue, on the contrary, they were very much at leisure. Nevertheless, Milton is part of the postlapsarian world and as such, the temporal qualities of narration are equally problematic for him.

The following lines taken from Raphael's relation of the creation cannot be subject to either of the above critical remarks, and it clearly proves that Milton knew quite well what difficulties talking about God entailed.

¹ All quotations are taken from the Hanford edition (see Works Cited), whose notes I have also made extensive use of.

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

(VII.174-9)

Here the *process of speech* is opposed to *immediate acts*, and the brilliance of the term "more swift/Than time or motion" cannot be overemphasised. Motion requires space, the other element creating the basic structure for everyday human experience², as well as time, and by coordinating it with time, Milton closes both the temporal and the spatial gaps between God's speech and the creation of the new, i.e. visible, world. God's words which are at the same time acts become a physical entity which move within the co-ordinates of time and space, yet defy those limits. This is necessary for Milton to cut across the paradox of God's infinity and the finitude of the created beings. It is, after all, mind blowing to think that what God says is realized there and then [from God's eternal point of view] yet not quite there and not quite then [from the lesser beings' point of view]. Furthermore, as God created the world by his word, he cannot twice say it because the first will be sufficient. Milton, however, needs him to first make the proposal in Heaven, otherwise there would be confusion among the angels who cannot know God's mind without being told, and then he narrates the actual creation mainly using the text of Genesis 1.

Milton could rely on well established Christian theological doctrine and exegetical practice, which also have to come to terms with the paradoxes of time and language, to employ the Son as the Father's representation on earth and his Word. The visible world is, then, created by God's Word i.e. the Son, and Milton relates the events accordingly. In other words, God's proposal for the creation (VII.152-73) and its actual realization (VII.210-42 and 243-547) are simultaneous, but human language is incapable of simultaneity: precisely what Milton says in the quotation above.

² Despite its far-reaching philosophical consequences, it would seem pointless to me to discuss the niceties of twentieth-century physics here. Matter and space/time may be inseparable, but ordinary human experience of time and space as a framework within which material things exist and move will continue.

Once it is established that Milton was aware of the problems of narration, it is now possible to proceed to investigate what solutions he suggested to overcome them. The most conspicuous, and probably most widely discussed, one is his introduction of an integrated metaphysics based on the projection of the immanent into the transcendental. This ontology is certainly well known from medieval theology, the great hierarchy of beings with God at its top and then neatly organized down to unformed matter (see Lewis 1942:73-77). Milton uses the idea not simply to organize intellectual and spiritual dependence, but creates a spatial and temporal continuum throughout the whole Universe, including the Visible World, Heaven, and Hell as well as Chaos and Night. He only has experience of this world, so he projects what holds true here into the other realms. His angels' corporeal-material qualities including feeding and sexuality have often been treated. What concerns my present enquiry is the existence of time outside the bounds of this world.

After the invocation leading into a brief summary of events in, significantly, reversed chronological order, the epic begins in Hell with the description of the fallen angels re-organizing themselves. Hell is placed in the middle of Chaos by *The Argument*, with an incidental remark that "Heaven and Earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet accursed." The first lines of the narrative proper begin as follows:

Nine times the space that measures day and night
 To mortal men, he [Satan] with his horrid crew
 Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf
 Confounded though immortal.

(I.50-3)

The very first thing Milton does in his poem is to give the impression of a temporal setting. He pinpoints the time as a fixed point. He anchors, as it were, the narrative right at the start; this is his first step in organizing a poetic cosmos out of the unformed chaotic material of his subject matter. We now think we know when the action begins. This, of course, is a false impression. Satan lay for nine days, so the action begins nine days after—what? There is a chain, to use my previous metaphor, hanging loose from the upper end of the action, but there is no anchor tied to it.

The setting is in Hell, supposedly before the visible world was created³ and definitely before the Fall, yet in the first four lines there are two references to mortality. The one to *mortal men* seems to be a conscious assertion of the difficulty of introducing time in a realm beyond this world. What Milton does is, to return to my metaphor for this last once, anchor the action in human experience. Or to put it the other way round, he indicates the point where he leaves our world.

Creating the chronology of events in retrospect, it becomes obvious that earth and man are created by the time Satan regains consciousness after his fall from Heaven. Milton adopts the Biblical story of creation with its burden-like repetition of "And there was evening and there was morning—the first day" (Gen 1.5). In retrospect, it is not entirely anachronistic to measure time in human terms for the fallen angels, but the mortality of man is certainly disturbing at this point.

As the narrative proceeds, there are repeated references to a temporal dimension of the entire Universe, making sense outside the limits of the visible world. The very fact of the new world's creation is related to other events on that larger time scale of the Universe. Satan himself mentions "a fame in Heaven that *ere long*" (I.651 - italics mine) a new world will be created. It is often asserted to have been foretold (II.280, 345ff, 830, X.482), and Chaos terms it as "now lately" (II.1004) founded. Moreover, common measurements of time are frequently used in connection with what we would expect to be the sphere of the timeless. Raphael was absent on the day of Adam's creation (VIII.229). Each fallen angel has to kill "The irksome hours, till his great chief return" (II.527). Uriel says that Satan came to him disguised "This day at the height of noon" (IV.564), while Raphael relates his rebellion to have taken place at midnight (V.667). And indeed, the battle in Heaven takes three days (V.675, VI.1-12, 521-24, 539, 699 etc.), and the fallen angels must "undergo/This annual humbling certain numbered days" (X.575-6). They originally hoped that their "supreme foe in time" might remit (II.210), and their "empire [...] might rise/By policy and long process of time" (II.296-7).

Even if we allow, although I cannot justify this standpoint, that examples taken from after the creation might be explained away, not all of the above can be

³ The question of what Milton meant by implying that the setting was before the creation of Heaven remains open, but it need not concern us here. [Cf. also II.1004, VII.230ff.]

dismissed. The unquestionable proof, however, comes from Raphael, who discusses the issues of metaphysics with Adam, including the relevance of time to eternity.

As yet this world was not, and Chaos wild
 Reign'd where these Heavens now roll, where Earth now rests
 Upon her center poised, when on a day
 (For time, though in eternity, applied
 To motion, measures all things durable
 By present, past, and future) on such day
 As Heaven's great year brings forth...

(V.577-82)

The notion is paradoxical, if not a contradiction in terms, and Milton's [in]famous syntax leaves the formulation open to several possible interpretations, but there is no room to doubt that in the Miltonic Universe there is time in eternity.

Once he could not transcend time, Milton projected its validity into the transcendental. With this ingenious manoeuvre he vastly extended the boundaries of the speakable world. He could not, however, overcome the ultimate paradox: his Universe is still time-bound, and he must believe that there is something beyond the limits of time i.e. past the limits of his Universe. For what remains outside, we still have no better words than *God* and *eternity*. Both of them must *per definitionem* be left out of any temporal structure. And so Milton observes these limits. The chronology of his narration begins with the day of the Son's anointing and ends with his Second Coming. Milton says nothing of what happened before that day⁴ or what is to come after the apocalypse: there is timeless eternity.

One more thing needs to be added here. In Milton's concept as outlined by Raphael to Adam in V.469-505 and partly by the Son and God himself in VI.731-3 and VII.154-61, respectively, there is room for development even without the Fall. Man by long persistence in obedience is to become perfected and raised to the same level as the angels, and ultimately God is to be all in all. Such development, i.e. change, can only be possible in time, hence the justification of it

⁴ There are brief references to the creation of Heaven of Heavens [as distinct from Heaven and Earth] and the angels in III.390-1 and V.833-42, respectively, but these, and a few others of similar nature, cannot be located on any time scale on the evidence of the text.

in eternity. The achievement of that unity would have been the alternative ending point of history in Doomsday's stead. What commences that point is the same in both cases, and it cannot really be spoken about; it is in fact unthinkable for time is a limit not only to speaking but also to thinking.

What Milton does to create a logically acceptable framework, in the final analysis, is not too much although it is all he can do. By projecting time into those spheres, he extends the limits of the speakable [or 'narratable'] from the creation to the anointing of the Son in Heaven. Incidentally, Parousia still remains a boundary he cannot overstep.

God also constitutes a problem, even between the Anointing and the Second Coming, by his immutability, infinity, eternity.

Concepts of change—time: past, present, future; movement forward or back, as well as seeming movement; hope and fear—are in man's mind, not God's, whose omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience are unadorned, always the same, unaccommodated. The poem demonstrates the paradox in various ways. (Shawcross 1982:7)

Inasmuch as he tries to manifest God in time Milton is in danger of reducing him: the 'frontal' presentation of God in *Paradise Lost* has been subject to much criticism. There are, however, passages where Milton successfully manages to balance on the edge between silence and error, naturally in the form of paradoxes.

Between Hell and Heaven Satan finds a dark
 Illimitable ocean without bound,
 Without dimension; where length, breadth, and height,
 And time, and place, are lost; where eldest Night
 And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
 Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
 Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.

(II.891-7)

Later in Book VII "God declares that the undifferentiated matter of Chaos is part of his own substance, but a part into which he has chosen not to project his spirit" (Hanford 1956:361n). The "dark/Illimitable ocean" is, then, part of God, and what is said of its dimensionlessness is true of God: in him time and place are lost. For the poem to make sense and to be comprehensible, Milton must of course limit the illimitable, find time and place where they are lost, but to declare something and then carry on contrary to that principle, i.e. to make two

contradictory observations, and yet claim that both sides hold true at the same time, is the best man can do in speaking of the unspeakable God.

Another device Milton can, and indeed often does, resort to is the mixing of spatial and temporal dimensions.

Him [Satan] God beholding from his prospect high,
Wherein past, present, future he beholds,
Thus to his only Son foreseeing spake.

(III.77-9)

In the description preceding these lines, God is confined to his throne on high, a particular spot in space. He has to bend down his eye to see Earth and the wall of Heaven. In this presentation of God his substance does not seem to be present everywhere, but he can see everything, which can be taken as a metaphor for omnipresence. Past, present, future are turned, and not without a pun on *foreseeing*, into spatial realities which can be viewed from high. As up and down, near and far, vertical and horizontal are confused in Chaos as is evident from a careful reading of Satan's flight through it in II.890-1044, so are time and space indistinguishable in God's reality.

The logical framework cannot hold God, but Milton can still speak of him albeit what he says is not strictly rational. What is less than God and does not exceed the temporal limits of the Anointing and Parousia can, however, be treated within the Miltonic structure of *Paradise Lost*. As has been seen above, there is time in this realm, but Milton's treatment of it is not what could be expected. The way is cleared for a linear narration yet the actual narrative of *Paradise Lost* is anything but linear. A decent epic ought certainly to adopt the principle of *in medias res*, but Milton goes much further than that.

The basic narrative structure can be easily outlined with its six pairs of books and three blocks of four, the first two of which are in reverse order. There are six books on the first level of narration and six narrated within the narration. The beginning of the narrative fits in the middle of the structure after Book VI, and the temporal and narrative scales are brought together by the end of Book VIII, so Book IX of the actual Fall of man is again on the first level and the reader has full knowledge of the preceding events. How much this structure owes to classical examples has been the subject of learned studies. My concern here is the possibility to establish a more precise chronology. It is certainly not out of the question. One can attempt to draw up a time line for the events mentioned in

Paradise Lost and locate the relevant line numbers on it. It is nevertheless a very difficult exercise because Milton's text abounds in references forward and backward. A few lines from Book X will illustrate the difficulty.

Meanwhile ere thus was sinned and judged on Earth,
 Within the gates of Hell sat Sin and Death,
 In counterview within the gates, that now
 Stood open wide, belching outrageous flame
 Far into Chaos, since the Fiend passed through,
 Sin opening, who thus now to Death began.

(229-34)

The passage begins with two—mutually exclusive—temporal expressions which can be barely reconciled. What they refer to is again two distinct events, Adam and Eve's fall and the Son's pronouncing judgement on them. After this dubious temporal setting comes a description of what happens in the *now* of the narrative, but very soon there is a reference to what has gone before, Satan's leaving Hell. Although it is uncertain whether the scene should be considered simultaneous with the events in Eden, and if so, with which one of them, or it precedes them, we can successfully try to locate all the incidents referred to on the time scale. Unfortunately, not of the whole of *Paradise Lost* can be said that much. In Book III the Father speaks to the Son as follows.

Man falls, deceived
 By the other first; Man therefore shall find grace,
 The other none. In mercy and justice both,
 Through Heaven and Earth, so shall my glory excel,
 But mercy first and last shall brightest shine.

(130-4)

The deception and fall of man are not very difficult to locate. The following lines, however, include unspecified future reference to his finding grace and mercy shining "first and last." First, as the ensuing dialogue between the two persons of the Godhead indicate, man shall find grace in the Son offering himself to redeem him. It actually happens in the Incarnation and Passion, but ultimately on Doomsday when he is favourably judged. These three events, thousands of years apart on the human time scale, are all brought together, and the Father's words refer to all of them at once. Furthermore, as a prefiguration of the Last

Judgement, man is shown grace by the Son when he is judged, and subsequently clothed, in the Garden of Eden.

Further complicating the linear time scale are those passages that can be interpreted with reference to the political-historical reality of seventeenth-century England. An instance of that can be found in the description of Nimrod, representing the archetypal figure of the tyrant and as such easily interpreted as Charles I:

A mighty hunter thence he shall be styled
 Before the Lord, as in despite of Heaven,
 Or from Heaven claiming second sovranty;
 And from rebellion shall derive his name,
 Though of rebellion others he accuse.

(XII.33-7)

For a seventeenth-century English mind these lines were probably unmistakable. They echo the political-philosophical debates concerning the divine rights of kingship, while rebellion and accusation were very much part of the everyday political reality in the age of Milton. The entire text of *Paradise Lost* has a political message, and in an era which was only sobering up after the unfulfilled millennial expectations, even the eschatological allusions could be understood as referring to the present. As Margarita Stocker observes,

many contemporary readers believed that they were living in that last age and suffering the ravages of Antichrist, the apocalyptic persona of Satan himself. In the dramatic plot-time of *Paradise Lost* the Latter Days lie in the future, but in the reader's horizon of expectation they could be regarded as current time.

(1988:62-3)

It is thus impossible to neatly tidy up the time scale of the narrative because first we should break up the text into minute units, probably words, to disentangle the various temporal threads, and more importantly, that would not work either as the smallest units of meaning would include ambiguous ones with multiple references.

The *in medias res* beginning inevitably results in the discrepancy of the narrative and the temporal scales but this is complicated by one of the most outstanding beauties of *Paradise Lost*, Milton's invention of epic similes. They irredeemably confuse the linearity of the narration. They side step every limit;

retreating into subclauses they slip out of the present of the main clauses and freely wander anywhere in time and space defying their confinement. They, like his identifying the fallen angels with heathen deities, provide an excellent means for Milton to combine classical myth and Christian doctrine as well as meet the 'encyclopedic' requirement of the epic form. He can incorporate an incredible amount of information which would be otherwise impossible to include in his poem. Knowledge about the postlapsarian world and human history provided in the form of epic similes is in fact comparable to that given in Michael's presentation to Adam in Books XI-XII. Numerous examples of historic similes are readily available in the text. One of the most striking ones is in the description of Satan's shield and spear right at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*.

[T]he broad circumference
 Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
 Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
 At evening from the top of Fesole,
 Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
 Rivers and mountains in her spotty globe.
 His spear, to equal which the tallest pine
 Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
 Of some great ammiral, were but a wand
 He walked with...

(I.286-95)

The reader probably finds nothing astonishing in these similes and can freely admire the beauty of the lines. The reader is, of course, a contemporary or belated successor of Milton. He knows of the moon, Galileo, Norway and the rest. If, however, we bear in mind how far in the poem we have proceeded by this passage, the similes seem rather out of place. The setting is in Hell, and although Heaven and Earth are [probably] already created so the moon, rivers and mountains do exist, none of this information is yet known to the reader. Fiesole, Valdarno, Norway are certainly anachronistic names if we adhere to the logic of the poem. Admirals and huge masts are more relevant to Milton's England than to anything else in the poem though we may concede that they are not strictly located in time. The invention of the telescope and Galileo, the Tuscan artist nonetheless are. They belong to the seventeenth century. To be precise, Galileo died in 1641 i.e. before Milton's writing *Paradise Lost*, yet the verb of the sentence is in the present tense rather than the past.

The effect of these similes is complex. Milton totally relativizes the time scale by equating past and present. He breaks the strict inner logic of the narrative and makes the reader include their knowledge of the world at large into the process of reading and appreciating the poem. In the previous example he does so by simply linguistically presenting images from outside the basic setting and trusting that language is strong enough to bridge the notional gap. Raphael, however, is not so sure of himself when talking to Adam:

As armies at the call
 Of trumpet (for of armies thou hast heard)
 Troop to their standard, so the watery throng...
 (VII.295-7)

This is the second narrative level. The speaking voice is not that of the poet to the reader but of Raphael addressing Adam. More care is required here, and before the reader gets carried away by the same force of the similes as on almost countless occasions before, he—at least as much as Adam—is reminded of the narrative situation by an interjection. The poet and the reader might, and undoubtedly do, know what armies and trumpets are, war imagery is very much part of the ordinary stock in *Paradise Lost*. But it is not only the reader who must understand the simile but also the primary narratee Adam. War has not been part of his experience unlike his sons' after the English Civil War. He must be therefore reminded of the war in Heaven whose story he was related in the previous books. And the reader must be equally reminded that Adam can understand war imagery, and the narrative makes proper sense on its primary level not only on the secondary one.

The geographical location of Eden in Book IV is not an epic simile but bears the same consequence for the time scale. When Satan views Paradise from the Tree of Life, he sees

Eden stretch[.] her line
 From Auran eastward to the royal towers
 Of great Seleucia, built by Grecian kings,
 Or where the sons of Eden long before
 Dwelt in Telasar.

(210-14)

Again, points wide apart on the time scale are presented as simultaneous. Eden could not stretch to Seleucia because the city did not exist as yet, and by the time Alexander's general came to build it, Paradise—as we learn it from XI.829-35—had been swept away by the Flood. A peculiar twist is given to the description by the term *sons of Eden long before*. To define men to come as 'sons of Eden' in a description of that place obviously creates, at least linguistically, simultaneity. The time reference *long before* is paradoxical for it does not point backward but forward as compared with the present of the narration. Its point of reference is the time of the Grecian kings rather than the time in Eden though the very presence of the word would suggest that. Linearity is concealed, simultaneity created.

What we are left with is, then, a logical structure which enables the author to speak of a great many things inexpressible otherwise and a narrative which repeatedly obscures that framework. As T. S. Eliot said, "the emphasis is on the sound, not the vision, upon the word, not the idea" (1947:270). By projecting time into a significant part of eternity, Milton establishes the possibility of a narrative. The events, however, are far from narrated in their chronological order, nor is simply a section of the linear time scale taken from its original position and placed at the beginning as suggested by my [over]simplified outline above. Throughout the poem Milton endeavours to complicate the time scale in a way that distinct points are brought together as if in the same event, and future and past become simultaneous. It is not only the past and future of the narrated time that become present but, more significantly, they concur with the present of the narration or reading. What is beyond the possibilities of logic is thus not impossible for language. He cannot create a logical structure for eternity, and even if he could it would render narration inconceivable, but in his narrative he manages to linguistically realize eternal present—which by nature is a paradox for logic. As Albert R. Cirillo says,

Milton has embodied in the very structure of his narration the paradox of eternity: the effect is that of a double time scheme whereby events that are being expressed in temporal terms—in sequential action—are simultaneously occurring in the eternal present which is the central setting of the poem.

(1967:215)

There and then become here and now in the poem; everything takes place between God's proclaiming the Son his Anointed One reigning for ever and the—necessarily—immediate realization of those words which is, nevertheless, still a future event from a human point of view. Milton's achievement in creating the poetic reality of eternal present has been acknowledged by several studies. Margarita Stocker underlined the central importance of the heavenly battle which happened once as narrated in the structural and thematic centre of *Paradise Lost* and is happening now and always till the Second Coming. A. R. Cirillo (1967) analyzed the Great Year's single noon and the opposition or equivalence of noon and midday while John Shawcross emphasized the acceptance of ever changing present as the source of happiness.

I talked above about Milton's mixing of temporal and spatial dimensions as a way of expressing the notion of God's eternity. In his presence "time, and place, are lost." As far as timelessness is a reality for man and Satan, it is also expressed in spatial terms: Milton is consistent in his paradoxes throughout. Satan, proudly taking possession of Hell in Book I, exclaims,

Hail horrors, hail
 Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
 Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
 A mind not to be changed by place or time.
 The mind is its own place, and in itself
 Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

(250-5)

He will soon learn that his freedom is limited to the second option, he can only turn heaven into hell because he carries hell with[in] himself. Having left Hell and viewing Paradise he still cannot be happy for

horror and doubt distract
 His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir
 The Hell within him, for within him Hell
 He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
 One step no more than from himself can fly
 By change of place.

(IV.18-23)

His damnation is eternal because Hell is inseparable from him; the temporal infinitude is expressed in terms of spatial identity. His main heresy was to equal

himself with God claiming to have been from all eternity (cf. V.859-63 vs. VII.405-6). His punishment is in turn the fulfilment of that wish, he is doomed to be the same without change; his immortality becomes a curse for him.

Adam and Eve, on the other hand, exactly by their ability to change, which in the postlapsarian world means that they are mortal, can repent and hope to be re-paradised after the Parousia. Till then their happiness, proximity to the eternal God, is also internalized. As Michael promises to Adam,

then wilt thou not be loth
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A Paradise within thee, happier far.
(XII.585-7)

Again, spatial identity is the metaphor of eternity. Time and space are essentially the same: a fact which Milton makes use of. What is here is always now. Eternity and omnipresence go hand in hand. By a highly complicated narrative structure confusing the linearity of chronology, Milton earlier created the impression of eternity enveloping time. Freely converting spatial and temporal dimensions one into the other, he now 'visualizes' eternity within time.

Finally, it remains to stress that it is precisely the fallen, i.e. ambiguous, human language that redeems Milton enabling him to overcome the limits of time and space. He capitalizes on the imprecision of meaning, double meaning, and interpretation. The fact that he can linguistically create what logic cannot hold has obvious implications concerning the nature of that language. Fallen though it may be, and albeit its original force is degraded, it no longer coincides with acts, yet it is still creative in the most divine sense of the word. Milton created eternity not only *within Paradise Lost* but also *by* it. His poetic achievement was enough to immortalize him, and the text itself exists changeless. Eternity is encapsulated in it, and, as long as copies of it remain available, hopefully until Doomsday, by reading it we can enter the realm of the eternal.

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