

THE LIMITS OF CREATION

Creation Divine and Poetic in Paradise Lost

With Special Reference to the Christian Cabalist Tradition

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### Abstract

The idea of creation is central to Paradise Lost. In the poem, this topic, important in the Judaeo-Christian logocentric tradition, has two principal dimensions, the divine and the poetic. First, this thesis scrutinizes the old notion of poet as creator with reference to the texts of Renaissance Christian Cabalism, in particular to those of Robert Fludd.

These texts incorporate a variety of extraneous material in an attempt to re-present or mirror, through the use of allegory, the plenitudinous nature of the creation. Such writing confronts the difference implicated in the similarities between Creator and poet, divine truth and text. This difference constrains the ideal fulness of these works and their mirroring power. The Christian Cabalist text is thus open-ended and eclectic and reflects the writer's indissoluble tie with the language he both uses and is constituted by.

The thesis then examines Paradise Lost in the light of these arguments and suggests how it can be seen to address itself to problems of fulness and difference. The poem confronts these firstly by exploiting the implications of closure; secondly by presenting the creation of the world from a variety of viewpoints, and finally by considering acts of transgression the result of a misplaced desire for fulness. The difference inherent in the act of representation is acknowledged primarily in the poem's hexameral aspect. The eclecticism of the treatment of the opening chapters of Genesis leads to the formulation of three independent and self-contained narratives, where the lack of consonance comments on the poetic task.

Finally, the thesis develops the idea of the poet as secretary. This notion is borrowed from the Christian Cabalist writer John Heydon and is here understood to indicate the disseminator of truth in difference. The secretary pays homage to divine fulness in articulation, the assertion of difference. Paradise Lost is considered as a secretarial text and viewed as ironical in the self-conscious, time-bound sense.

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## Introduction

### Section one

When Milton wrote Paradise Lost the notion of creation already had a well established second significance that added a mundane aspect to the theological concept. Renaissance texts are famous for their often elaborate comparisons between the divine and the human maker. In poetry, a form of human creativity which derives its name from the Greek for 'making', the realm of God and man were often thought to intersect, and in Paradise Lost the nature and consequence of these connections, the implied comparisons and differentiations, play an important role.

It is not surprising that this should be so, but the fact has not found fair reflection in the critical canon. There, subjects like the role of Satan and the significance of sin have taken precedence over creation. Contrary to Waldock<sup>1</sup> who thought that Paradise Lost reflects a failure of its poet to penetrate and accommodate the problems of writing, this thesis views Paradise Lost as a text where that issue features supremely. The story of creation, Genesis, is Milton's main source and the episode in book VII in which Raphael describes the process of creation to the human couple is a central one in the poem. Moreover, Paradise Lost is almost obsessively preoccupied with the other, artistic aspect of the notion of creation. The four invocations reflect extensively on the nature of the poet's work; daringly even, because such reflections on the nature of representation and expression interrupt the narrative. Furthermore, the narrative itself misses no occasion to pick up this strain of reflections. Milton's ideas about this notion of creation are not only interesting in themselves and locally, but should be crucial in the reading and understanding of Paradise Lost as a whole.

But the notion of creation is perhaps as deep as Thomas Mann's bottomless well of the past. Milton was heir to a tradition of ideas which starts with the Bible and embraces countless pagan, Christian and Jewish doctrines. The aspect of creation, however, that is both prominent and particularly relevant in the poem is the linguistic, literary or textual element in the relations between God and man. The pre-eminence of this

linguistic or textual aspect in the Judaeo-Christian tradition to which Milton belonged is obvious: its logocentric identification of the divine agent with the word illustrates this well.

Specifically, this dissertation sets out to study creation in Paradise Lost in the context of the Renaissance phenomenon of Christian Cabalism and the writings brought forth by this 'school of thought'. In Christian Cabalism at least three traits converge that make it an especially promising source of insight into the notion of creation in Paradise Lost. These are Christian Cabalism's concern with creation; its eclecticism that caused it to consider, simultaneously, a substantial part of the doctrines that made up Milton's heritage; and its need to elaborate a typical textual strategy to handle and coordinate a number of very different texts.

This dissertation examines the works of Robert Fludd in greater detail than those of other Christian Cabalists. Other works are, however, considered here, some of which are less completely dedicated to the Christian Cabalist doctrine than Fludd's. John Webster, for instance, wrote with Cabalist sympathies and openly recommended Fludd's controversial work, but he was primarily a clergyman and a writer on educational advancement. Christian Cabalism was a widespread phenomenon and the extent of its impact diverse.

This study investigates notions of creativity through two topoi, plenitude (part I) and the mirror (part II). These topoi feature centrally in both Christian Cabalist texts and Paradise Lost. Each part of this thesis discusses a topos generally, then studies its treatment more closely in a Christian Cabalist text and finally, reads Paradise Lost in the light of the preceding two chapters. This consideration of two topoi demonstrates that a number of textual characteristics, such as plurality, openness, difference or repetition, found in Christian Cabalist texts are also found in Paradise Lost. The elucidation of these textual traits necessitates a revision of the relations between the theological and artistic/poetic aspects of the old concept of creation as they still are usually perceived. Hence part III proposes and explains a modification of the traditional understanding of the concept of the poet-creator. It is the aim of this dissertation, finally, to show how

this modified reading of the poet-creator metaphor significantly affects the reading of Paradise Lost.

The fact that nearly all the Christian Cabalist texts considered here are generically different from Paradise Lost should be given some attention. Neither Pico's works nor Fludd's are poetry. Mostly they are theological or 'scientific', speculative prose. Therefore neither their literary genre nor, (as is presently seen) their place among Milton's outspoken interests can claim to justify their central position here. Nevertheless, these facts alone do not suffice for their disqualification either. It would be regrettable if, on account of generic difference, the writings of, say, Freud and Nietzsche were not allowed to contribute to the study of many modern poets' works. From the moment literature is viewed from a wide historical-cultural perspective, the criticism that permits generic difference acquires a respectable place. Such a perspective opens up when it is realized that the individual text is inextricably bound up with other ones and that, hence, accounts of their interaction and common concern are as important as those that deal with their differences and particularities.

In this perspective the modern theoretical notion of intertextuality elucidates much. It argues for and informs the study of the manifold ways in which a particular text or discourse exists with and against an intricate web of other, more and less marginal discourses or texts, while it defers, as much as a coherent and articulate critique will admit, the assertion of origin or influence. Jonathan Culler formulates this as follows:

'Intertextuality' thus has a double focus. On the one hand, it calls our attention to the importance of prior texts, insisting that the autonomy of texts is a misleading notion and that a work has the meaning it does only because certain things have previously been written. Yet in so far as it focuses on intelligibility, on meaning, 'intertextuality' leads us to consider prior texts as contributions to a code which makes possible the various effects of signification. Intertextuality thus becomes less a name for a

work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture. The study of intertextuality is thus not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived;<sup>2</sup>

### Section two

The term Christian Cabalism is an abbreviation which embraces more than the Christian and Cabalist doctrines. Writers on the occult strains in Renaissance thought distinguish a variety of doctrines and tend to deal with them separately. Thus J.L. Blau analyses in detail the ways in which Cabala became entangled in many (Christian) Renaissance thinkers' work<sup>3</sup>; Allen Debus, a student of pre-modern science in the 17th century, devotes a book to the English Paracelsians<sup>4</sup>, and S.K. Heninger Jr takes charge of Pythagoreanism.<sup>5</sup> But when these are dealt with together, confusion ensues. Frances Yates, writing about the occult philosophy in the Elizabethan age, uses a number of terms in her preface, the first of which already corrects the title of the very book she is introducing:

If I were to try to formulate my intention in the present book in a title, I would have to fabricate a phrase like 'The Hermetic Philosophy in the Elizabethan age particularly in its relation to Christian Cabalism'. Obviously, this would be impossibly clumsy.<sup>6</sup>

Furtheron there are terms like 'the Hermetic-Cabalist core of Renaissance Neoplatonism'<sup>7</sup> and 'Christian Cabalist Neoplatonism'<sup>8</sup> side by side with 'Hermetic-Cabalist Neoplatonism'<sup>9</sup>. Yates explains something about the origins of this terminological tangle:

[Pico] learned the [Cabalistic] techniques from Spanish Jews but interpreted them in a Christian direction, for he believed that Cabala confirmed the truth of Christianity. Moreover, in associating Cabala with Hermeticism he introduced Hermetic magic into the

system. 'Christian Cabala' thus differs basically from Jewish Cabala in its Christian use of Cabalist techniques and its amalgamation of Hermeticism and Hermetic magic into the system.<sup>10</sup>

The only conspicuous absence in this quotation is that of Neoplatonism. J.L.Blau's work confirms Yates' by stressing the impurity of Christian reference to Cabala.<sup>11</sup> A look at the historical background and the nature of the Christian Cabalist text, explains and illustrates its eclecticism.

Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) and Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) are famous for their involvement with the foundation of the Christian Cabalist tradition and with the activities of the Florentine Academy. Although they were accused, in their lifetime and after, of fostering heresies and sponsoring witchcraft, they were pious, if unorthodox Christians. They worked for popes, were banned by them, but also received absolution. Both were philosophers and theologians (terms not clearly separate in an age when any speculation took place under divine aegis), and Ficino was also a translator. While he was translating recently emerged Platonic texts, the body of writings known as the Corpus Hermeticum came to his attention, captured his mind and caused him to enter history as the first propagator of Christian Platonism and Hermetism in the Renaissance.

This Corpus Hermeticum, compiled during the last stages of the Greek empire and consisting of gnostic doctrine, had already been known to early churchfathers like Lactantius and Augustine. The former believed firmly in the purported ancient provenance of these texts. It was generally assumed that they stemmed from times not much later than those of Moses himself. And Lactantius, perceiving some similarities between the Hermetic doctrine and the Christian one, did not hesitate to use it to the glorification and advancement his faith. If apparently non-Christian texts could be seen to contain, somehow, Christian truths, they were in fact nothing but Christian doctrine in disguise. Only in 1614 did Isaac Casaubon, the renowned Swiss scholar (who lived in England), shatter that illusion of origins when he revealed more realistic dates. Festugière, the modern authority on Hermetism, has shown that these not so ancient texts evince the formative influence of both Judaism and Platonism, the very doctrines to which Pico and Ficino

'joined' them. Ficino hence both rightly and erroneously detected correspondences (in a manner resembling typology which reads the Old Testament as though it prefigures the New Testament allegorically) between his Platonic and Hermetic texts on the one hand and Christian doctrine on the other. This both provided the initial thrust to what was to become an influential branch of theological syncretism, and made the decisive move toward the incorporation of magia naturalis. Ficino's interest in Hermetism had led him to this form of magic that involved mystical contemplation of the cosmos and certain manipulations of matter which were assumed to have spiritual effect.<sup>12</sup>

Pico, through his encounter with the Cabala (with which he was probably made familiar by exiled Spanish Jews like Elijah del Medigo, Leo Abarbanel and Jochanan Aleman)<sup>13</sup> added to Ficino's magia naturalis a more dangerously esoteric branch of magic, namely magia spiritualis. Here magic extended its field of action from this world to the supernatural realm of spirits whose power it invoked. Besides his older contemporary's Platonism and Hermetism, Pico also took Jewish mysticism, Cabala, as a third element in the synthesis of ancient doctrines that was to serve the Christian one. The Jewish mysticism could offer an even more obvious link with Christianity than the (pseudo-)Egyptian and Greek ones.

The intense preoccupation with texts (a sign in itself of the onset of the Renaissance), with their similarities and differences, as with the way they allow for interpretation and collation, dominates Christian Cabalism. Two of Pico's best known works, On the Dignity of Man (1487) and the Heptaplus (1489) exemplify this literary critical or textual propensity.

On the Dignity of Man, as the title indicates, is concerned with man's position in the world. In analogy with Christian Cabalism's textual syncretism, man (and not the text) is assumed to comprehend all previous creation rather than constituting a separate, isolated entity. Pico writes:

[God] the Artisan (...) desired that there be someone to reckon up the reason of such a big work to love its beauty and to wonder at its greatness. Accordingly, now that all things had been completed, as Moses

and Timaeus testify, He lastly considered creating man.<sup>14</sup>

But since

there was nothing in the archetypes from which he could mold a new sprout,<sup>15</sup>

and since

Everything was filled up (...) the best of workmen decided that that to which nothing of its very own could be given should be, in composite fashion, whatsoever had belonged individually to each and every thing.<sup>16</sup>

Man is located at the centre, at once contained by and surveying creation of which he is, hence, part, yet from which he also stands aloof. Since he is a 'work of indeterminate form', it is up to him to

sculpt thyself into whatsoever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine.<sup>17</sup>

Corresponding to this synthetic concept of man is the description of the desire of the god-loving soul and her acquisition of various wisdom:

the King of Glory may descend and coming with her Father, may make his residence in her. If she shows herself worthy of such as great guest (...) then in a golden gown as in a weddingdress, wrapped in a multiple variety of teachings she will welcome her beautiful guest.<sup>18</sup>

And in order to emphasize further the centrality of his eclecticism, Pico also finally states its role clearly in relation to his present work:

I have resolved not to swear by anyone's word, that I may base myself on all teachers of philosophy, examine all writings, recognize every school.<sup>19</sup>

As man in his initial formlessness is free (and yet obliged) to contemplate the whole of nature, its lower regions as well as the higher ones, so is the writer who gleans his text from a wealth of pre-existing ones. References to Timaeus or to Moses' Bible are equally expedient in the effort to broaden the basis and scope of Christian doctrine. Pico read the Platonic, Hermetic and Jewish texts as a devout Christian. Here he speaks of the subordinate role of the Cabalist writings:

I saw in them (God is my witness) a religion not so much Mosaic as Christian. There is the mystery of the Trinity, there the incarnation of the Word, there the divinity of Messiah.<sup>20</sup>

Given his unique mobility along the scale of creation, man is charged with a special task. First, he must distinguish creation's elements or components. It is vital to know the low from the high (Judaism, for instance, from the superior Christian faith). Second, and more important perhaps, he must act as a kind of matchmaker. Pico does not only match Judaism and Paganism to Christianity, but, proceeding along even less conventional lines, he conceives of his work metaphysically as that of the magician who 'marries earth to heaven'.<sup>21</sup> This 'marriage' is analogous to the textual syncretism, for the latter results from disengaging the Christian-like elements of foreign doctrines ('the earth') in order to join them to Christian theology proper ('heaven'). 'Marrying earth to heaven' is a strikingly economical image for the characteristic all-embracing movement of the Christian Cabalist esoteric.

Pico's Heptaplus belongs to the tradition of hexameral literature and is quite different from its predecessor. The Heptaplus, which applies the hermeneutics described in the Dignity of Man, is a many-levelled interpretation of Genesis which, predictably, draws upon various sources and authorities. Pico's talent for perceiving connections and correspondences is obvious everywhere in the Dignity and in the Heptaplus correspondence rises to the role of structural principle. The work consists of seven expositions (plus one) each of which offers an alternative interpretation of the seven days of Genesis. These interpretations in their turn are governed by the notion of a certain hierarchy of creation, so that the first exposition moves on the elementary level, the second on the celestial, the third on the angelic,

the fourth on the human, and so forth. Each such exposition itself is subdivided into seven chapters, corresponding to Genesis' order of creation, as Pico explains:

since the seven expositions are arranged in seven books and each book is divided into seven chapters, the whole corresponds to the seven days of creation.<sup>22</sup>

And he defends his allegorical search behind 'ordinary' surfaces:

Plato himself concealed his doctrines beneath coverings of allegory, veils of myth, mathematical images and unintelligible signs of fugitive meaning (...) Therefore, if we think the writings of Moses commonplace because on the surface they are ordinary and crude, let us likewise condemn for ignorance and crudity all the ancient philosophers <sup>23</sup>

This allegorical practice is necessitated by the very state of creation (or nature) itself. The three worlds, supracelestial, celestial and sublunary, are not only joined in harmony but also mirror one another. And Pico establishes the link of these with texts:

Bound by the chains of concord, all these worlds exchange natures as well as names with mutual liberality.  
From this principle flows <sup>(...)</sup> the science of all allegorical interpretation.<sup>24</sup>

What follows (the seven expositions with their interpretations) is typically esoteric, an attempt to provide what the writer(s) of Genesis left out: speculations on the precise proceedings of creation which rely on Hermetism, Cabalism<sup>25</sup>, and other occult sources.

As far as Cabala is concerned, Blau argues that Pico's Jewish knowledge in Heptaplus is sketchy and does not derive from Cabala itself but rather from Talmud (the Jewish legal codex).<sup>26</sup> But although Pico may not employ Cabala proper, the text under discussion is occult beyond doubt. In fact many Renaissance writers do not appear to distinguish between Talmudists and Cabalists, calling them indiscriminately and often derogatorily 'Cabalisticall Rabbins'. 'Le terme Kabbaliste va même devenir une injure constante'<sup>27</sup> writes Secret. Integration and tolerance, for the time being

at least, often was of text and method rather than of the Jewish religion itself.

On the Dignity of Man as well as Heptaplus evinces how Pico tended to form his ideas about God, man and the world along lines parallel to those he had about writing (and especially of allegory). What he thought about that activity is perhaps most powerfully represented in his image of man's unique place both at the summit and in the middle. It provides for a notion of the artist/writer as free to arrange and dispose the very world (or language) he is also bound in and by. Similar ideas survive in more recent texts, for instance in Wallace Stevens' 'The Idea of Order at Key West'. There the she-protagonist who sings as she walks along the seashore is, simultaneously, outside her song as its 'artificer', as well as being enclosed by it when the song comes to constitute 'the world in which she sang'.<sup>28</sup> Clearly, the magical element in Pico's doctrine, otherwise deemed illicit, is substantially demystified when seen as one way of describing this particular creative power.

It is, then, possible to consider Pico's works in their literary or textual aspect rather than from a purely religious viewpoint. In Christian Cabalism the reader is confronted by a piously Christian school of thought which distinguished (and thus perhaps implicated) itself by its peculiarly textual overtones and tendencies.

### Section three

Apart from textual syncretism it is possible to observe other traits in Christian Cabalist texts. It has been said already that their religious seriousness is undisputed despite their evident unorthodoxy. Their preoccupation with creation, with the cosmogony as well as with the created world, is another such trait, and must be seen in that religious light. The 'creature' consists of everything between heaven and earth and is in its entirety subject to the contemplation of the Christian Cabalist. Thus, later in the period, mystical meditation occurs in friendly association with forms of early physics or chemistry, and the respective idioms, ethereal and worldly, mix. Elaborations on the theme of Genesis tend to use terms deriving from alchemy, whilst, for instance, the movement of the winds and the alternation of the tides are conceived as the work of spiritual forces. Another frequent topic is that of the

secret wisdom hidden in the created world. This secret can be discovered in a multiplicity of ways including astrology, geomancy and Cabalist numerology and letter speculation.

The role Christian Cabalism attributes to the word beyond the orthodox Christian, logocentric notion, is connected with the fact that in Christian Cabalism letters and signs are cardinally important. Here Henry Cornelius Agrippa's (1486-1535) lines convey something of that charged meaning:

Words, therefore, are the fittest medium betwixt the speaker and the hearer, carrying with them not only the conception of the mind, but also the vertue [ie. power] of the speaker with a certain efficacy unto the hearer, and this oftentimes with so great a power, that oftentimes they change not only the hearer, but also other bodies, and things that have no life.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, Christian Cabalist texts are densely packed with references and quotations, elaborate analogies, curious correspondences, and illustrations which are often fascinating and sometimes bewildering.

Just as the idiom of Christian Cabalism is chronically disparate (a cause for both interesting diversity and vagueness) its representatives were men of quite different temperament and occupation. Ficino had been philosopher and humanist translator, Pico a philosopher-count; Francesco Giorgi (1466-1540), an early and famous follower, was a Franciscan monk in Venice, and Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), pupil of Pico, and writer of De Arte Cabballistica (1517) was a theologian and widely renowned Hebraist and Greek scholar; Paul (or Agostino) Ricci (first half of the 16th century) was an erudite Jewish convert to Catholicism, and Paracelsus (1493-1541) was deeply involved in alchemical medicine. Later, in England, John Dee (1527-1608) was a royal astrologer, famous mathematician, and posthumously 'honoured' as black magician (in Jonson's Alchemist), while Robert Fludd was associated with both the secret Rosicrucian society, and, uneasily, with the London College of Physicians.

Christian Cabalism, which by the beginning of the 17th century had reached all over Europe, significantly encapsulated elements that are

commonly taken to characterize the period of the Renaissance as a whole. Among these is its interest in creation (in that notion's wider sense) and its tendency to spread across the European continent and beyond, where it attached itself to people of different convictions (some were Catholics, some Protestants; Reuchlin even was considered one of the Reformation's forerunners) which is paralleled by the period's expanding geographical, ideological and religious horizons. Indeed, J.Dagens observed Christian Cabalism's influential role in the development of a more tolerant religious climate in Europe, another Renaissance phenomenon:

cette influence de l'Hermétisme religieux a touché les protestants et les catholiques, favorisant chez les uns et les autres, les tendances les plus iréniques.<sup>30</sup>

And although it is now evident that Christian Cabalism's scientific preoccupations remained old fashioned and limited compared to the dramatic developments at the middle and end of the 17th century, Christian Cabalism also played a significant part in the process leading up to these.

Associated with the question of Christian Cabalism's role in the history of science, and in history as a whole, is the idea of some kind of a discontinuity occurring at the end of the 17th century.<sup>31</sup> This, in the history of science, has been depicted as the difference between pre-modern and modern man. The former lived in a world suffused with divine presence in which natural phenomena were perceived to occur and participate, a world where everything was related to everything else by rules of analogy and correspondence.

In modern man's immediate environment, by contrast, God was not so comprehensively immanent. These two sides of the pre-modern and the modern are not so easily divided, however: already before the onset of the Renaissance, a form of thought emerged in which they may have coexisted. An example of this is Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa's (1401-1464) Docta Ignorantia, a text which influenced Ficino and the Florentine Academy and even reached the English Neoplatonist 'academy' in Cambridge. Cassirer's summary description of Cusa's work shows how for the latter metaphysics and 'physics' interpenetrate:

As the "summit of theory" the insight now appears to Cusanus that the truth which he initially had sought in the darkness of mysticism, and which he had set up as the opposite of all multiplicity and change, was placed and manifested itself, nevertheless, in the midst of this empirical multiplicity itself.

Indeed it shouted out from the streets (...)

(...) the antithesis between God's being and that of the world should not be obliterated. But as [Cusanus'] De Visione Dei had taught that the truth of the general and the particularity of the individual inter-penetrates so that the Divine being is nothing but what is beheld through the infinitely various points of view; so we can perceive that being which is before all limitation or 'contraction' only in [or through] that very limitation. The ideal for which our consciousness can strive is, therefore, not to renounce or disown particularization and to cast it away, but rather exactly to unfold it in all its wealth.<sup>32</sup>

This philosophical and religious attitude constitutes an intermediate state between the two opposing sides in most histories of science. Notions of an intermediate state of some kind or another are indeed found in the work of quite a few modern Renaissance scholars, in various disciplines and contexts. These are usually and more obviously placed somewhere in the 17th and 18th centuries and not as early as the 15th. Harold Fisch makes the case of a Hebraic stage, uniting 'Jerusalem and Albion' in English (literary-religious) history, which can be found in the writings of men including Robert Fludd as well as John Milton, while Anthony Easthope, more recently, writes of Milton's sonnets as transitional texts in relation to Shakespeare's, on the one hand, and Dryden's on the other.<sup>33</sup> Roy Daniells, in an effort to apply art-historical method to Milton's oeuvre, uses baroque, the term for late Renaissance in its movement toward 18th century classicism.<sup>34</sup> J.A. Mazzeo and M. Mahood survey a territory more germane to this thesis: Mahood distinguishes a form of humanism she calls theocentric (she also, less

fortunately, tends to credit it with being the true brand of humanism) which is 'at home in the post-Renaissance world'.<sup>35</sup> Mazzeo, finally, observes in metaphysical poetry a combination of two contradictory poetics, the revelatory or divine, and the technical or ornamental one.<sup>36</sup>

It is difficult to account for the religious or even esoteric elements that still rather boldly occur in the works of Bacon, Kepler or Newton, in the philosophy of the founder of rationalism himself, Descartes, and in his successor Leibniz, who expands on the mystical-religious *topos* of memory. Brian Vickers et al. recognize and acknowledge the coexistence, in the work of these men, of occult and scientific thought, but are unable to offer a description of the circumstances that facilitated such a state of affairs.<sup>37</sup> Yet even early on, a way of managing the gap between the divine and the secular existed which preserved both sides. That approach consisted of a search for religious fulfilment through or in worldly involvement. Here religious and secular, the holy and the profane, assert themselves neither in spite of the gap nor even by way of crossing it, but exactly by virtue of its full recognition and acknowledgement. This dissertation looks at forms of writing typical of the Christian Cabalist way of thought in order to evolve a set of notions concerning text, caught in the idea of the secretarial work, that illuminates, from a literary point of view, rather than that of the history of science, this sketch of how an 'intermediate state' might be thought of.

#### Section four

The question of Milton's position in relation to Christian Cabalism needs to be considered in the light of Christian Cabalism's reputation in Europe. No matter how final the tradition's disappearance at the end of the 17th century, there is no doubt about its rapid growth during the two preceding centuries. An Eastern European prince and the queen of England knew of it quite intimately (at least for some time); it may well have inspired artists like Duerer and poets like Spenser and Sidney (who may also have been acquainted with John Dee).<sup>38</sup> When Robert Fludd published his work the famous theologian Marin Mersenne felt obliged to answer.<sup>39</sup> Less spectacular, but perhaps more important because more widely ranging, is the kind of popularity J.L. Blau refers to. Though even the greatest

Christian Cabalists had only a quite partial, generalized and often second-hand knowledge of the Jewish mysticism, it provided something for everyone:

Yet each thought that he had found in the Cabala what he was seeking. Some part of the appeal of Cabalism must be attributed to its chameleon quality. Each man could derive the aid he sought from its philosophical system, its canons of interpretation, its techniques, or its hermeneutic rules.<sup>40</sup>

With such varied appeal Cabala, for a while, was known far beyond its usual environment:

Every corner knew of and talked of Cabala soon after it had been presented in the work of Pico. Without benefit of mechanical means for the diffusion of knowledge, the men of the Renaissance managed to be au courant, to be literate in the themes of the moment. For a brief time the Hebrew Cabala was one of the themes of the moment, and the Christian interpretation of the Cabala was born.<sup>41</sup>

This more diffuse impact on the Renaissance world, the way a Christian interpretation of Cabalism had of interlocking with some of the most urgent issues and tendencies of the period and possibly participated in shaping them; the way also, Christian Cabalism seemed to contain and represent these, indicate how Milton's work may have been affected by it. For it would be inappropriate to view Milton as a spiritual comrade of men like Fludd, Dee or Heydon. It is even doubtful whether he kept his youthful sympathies for the group of less controversial fellow scholars known as the Cambridge Platonists. There are places in the Christian Doctrine where Milton explicitly denounces any speculative tastes possibly deduced from, for instance, the early Allegro and Penseroso, Comus or the 'Prolusions'. Paradise Lost warns repeatedly against certain misconceptions about the mind's ability to approach the divine. This may well be why Saurat's pioneering work (1924) on Milton and Fludd, never made a serious impact on the critical establishment. Its thesis about Milton and the Cabala did not convince because the supposed connection

with Fludd relies heavily on an itself controversial assumption that Milton was familiar with Cabala and could, moreover, not be sustained without the additional assumption that Milton was a believer in mortalism, a heterodoxy concerning the state of the soul after death.

Here, instead, it is in the first place assumed that there is no question of Milton being a Christian Cabalist. The past has shown how problematic it is to insert the poet in any distinct philosophical or religious context. On publication, in the 19th century, of his Christian Doctrine, readers' peace of mind concerning Milton's Protestant orthodoxy came to an end and the subject of his alleged heresies (their precise nature as well as number) has not been exhausted to this day.<sup>42</sup> Nor is it clear where he stood within the boundaries of contemporary accepted religion. Literary critical issues are equally clouded: Murrin, in his study of the nature of allegory, bestows upon Milton the honour of finally breaking with that form of expression<sup>43</sup>, while Fish<sup>44</sup> and Mahood<sup>45</sup> take a less radical view with Heninger<sup>46</sup> at the opposite end, considering Milton as a fully fledged 'divine' poet in the tradition of Sidney and Spenser. More about these controversies is said in later pages.

In this thesis Christian Cabalist eclecticism, conceived of as a textual model, provides a focus and a frame of reference. No attempt is made to solve longstanding problems like Saurat and Werblowsky's quarrel over the 'retraction theory'.<sup>47</sup> Not only are opinions divided on the existence and possible source of Milton's esoteric references, there is also a considerable group of scholars who altogether deny that such elements could have found entrance into Milton's thought or text. This opinion is represented in, for instance, the work of Broadbent, Kelly, Madsen and West.<sup>48</sup> The latter wavers between two positions when he argues in favour of Milton's knowledge of mysticism while also stressing Milton's incontestable antipathy to it. However, other studies by, for instance, Hunter, Martz, Mahood, Secret, Tillyard and Werblowsky encourage the consideration of Milton's work in such a context without thereby necessarily and rigorously identifying the two.<sup>49</sup> The following chapters concentrate on the kind of text Christian Cabalism (in 17th century England in particular) generated and how an insight into such a

text's characteristics and dynamics could illuminate the reading of  
Paradise Lost.

## Part I

'This cyclical book is God'  
-J.L.Borges, 'The Library of Babel'

### Chapter one The Plenum

#### Section one

In his Kabbalah and Criticism Harold Bloom put side by side Jewish mysticism and literary theory, remarking how little attention had been paid so far to Cabala's literary preoccupation.<sup>1</sup> Cabala's literary overtones had already been noted by Gershom Scholem, the prominent Cabala scholar, when he wrote how according to Cabala 'Letters enact creation [so that] every process in the world is a linguistic one.'<sup>2</sup> This characteristic of Cabala also became its hallmark in Western Europe: its complex theory and practice of letter manipulation was one of its most attractive features for the Christian Cabalists. According to this theory the letters of the Hebrew alef-bet (alphabet) were imbued with a supernatural power which might be invoked, for occult purposes, by a few cognoscenti.

Bloom adopts (with a 'revisionistic' touch characteristic of his earlier work) the model of creation behind this mystical art as an analogue (or 'precursor') to his own poetics of anxiety, to his scheme of revisionary ratios.<sup>3</sup> Though his tendency to reduce poetics to the terms of a psychological or mystical model does not suit the present approach, Bloom's work with Cabala adds weight to the case for looking at its adulterated, Christian form in a literary/theoretical context.

The sixteenth century architect of the Cabalists' famous cosmogonic model, based on the old texts of the Zohar, was Rabbi Isaac Luria from Safed.<sup>4</sup> He conceived of a process in three stages, of retraction or self-limitation (tsimtsum)<sup>5</sup>, the breaking of the vessels (shevirath ha-kelim) and tikkun or restitution or correction:

The tsimtsum ushers in the cosmic drama. (...) [This drama] is a

withdrawal [of God] into Himself. Instead of turning outward, He contracts His essence, which becomes more and more hidden. (...) [This process] creates a pneumatic, primordial space -which the Kabbalists call tehiru- and makes possible the existence of something other than God and His pure essence.<sup>6</sup>

In the primordial space interaction happens between the 'powers of stern judgement' left in the tehiru as a residue after God's retraction, and a ray of divine light emanating from the divine essence. As a result, the sephiroth, the ten 'fundamental categories' or 'archetypes of all being'<sup>7</sup> come into existence. But the vessels of the sephiroth which 'were designed (...) to serve as instruments of creation shattered under [the light's] impact'.<sup>8</sup> And this breakdown has cosmic proportions:

The breaking of the vessels continues into all the further stages of emanation and creation; everything is in some way broken, everything has a flaw, everything is unfinished.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, therefore, there is a dynamic of correction or restoration, a process of redemption in which man has an important role:

The world of nature and of human existence is the scene of the soul's exile. Each sin repeats the primordial event in part, just as each good deed contributes to the homecoming of the banished souls. (...) Everything that happens reflects observance or non-observance of the secret law of the tikkun. (...) the essential function of the Law, (...) is to serve as an instrument of the tikkun.<sup>10</sup>

The divine essence through whose retraction or self-limitation the process of creation begins, significantly is also called perfection or fulfilment.<sup>11</sup> But in the next step of the cosmogony this perfection nevertheless receives a supplement in the form of the previously described downpour. This state of creation as simultaneously mere supplement to the divine, retracted essence, and also that essence's plenteous, overflowing self-expression (in a linguistic, literary sense as much as in the onto-theological) sets the stage for the concept of plenitude now to be examined.

Section two

It is as the reverse of the horror vacui that the concept of plenitude is best known, assuring man of providence's eternal solicitousness. Scriptural phrases like 'God is all in all' capture this idea of divine provision. But the claims the concept makes on one's understanding of the assumed relations between the world and its creator are easily underestimated. The question, for instance, of what could move a God to create who was self-sufficient from eternity, persistently troubled religious men. And another no less delicate problem was that of the status of such a creation. Even though the world is full and plenteous by necessity, the image and off-spring of a perfect maker, it is still and only, the world: material and transient. Luria's model of creation, for example, responded to this by dividing the process, roughly, into two. First, the initial divine perfection contracts itself and thus creates a space different and empty, a lack. Then there is the emanation, a downpour of such extent that even the vessels made to contain it collapse under the strain. In Fludd's language (discussed at length in Chapter two) these two movements are called systole and diastole, or contraction and expansion. What such terms amount to is the fact that creation was viewed, simultaneously and paradoxically, under the signs of lack and excess. The world is God's image, the image of perfection and fulness—but as such it is unequal. Whether it be Cabalist creation through tsimtsum, its more orthodox Judaeo-Christian version, or the Platonic one, the initial work always becomes manifest in its flawedness. Vessels break; man, the pinnacle of creation, all too soon sins or banishes himself to the world of becoming. Creation, of necessity, turns out to fall short of its own full expression. And to complicate things further, it also constitutes the very effort to supplement that imperfect expression, this lack. This is the sense in which flawed, unequal creation is nevertheless the image of its maker. Plenitude, hence, is a paradoxical notion. In it the horror of loss and lack is irrevocably coupled with God's over-generous provisions. Imperfection is inscribed in the process of creation itself.

The classic work on fulness is A.O. Lovejoy's Great Chain of Being which traces the history of a famous trope of plenitude, the chain of being. From a more exclusively literary point of view E.M.W. Tillyard studied the

notion of the chain as a main constituent of the Elizabethan world picture,<sup>12</sup> but the former work provides by far the fullest historical and philosophical background for the *topos*. According to Lovejoy the notion of the chain is rooted in a contradictory mode of thought which he locates in Plato's account of the creation of the universe.<sup>13</sup> This contradiction is the source of other, subsequent descriptions of creation too. But in the 18th century it yields no more: then the ancient situation that demands mutual adjustment between the worlds of being and becoming gives way to a new state of affairs in which man exists in a universe governed by time, infinite space and uncontradicted becoming. The concept, for instance, from which pre-modern science derives (according to Lovejoy) differs from its modern counterpart in that its grounds are 'chiefly derivative from philosophical and theological premises'.<sup>14</sup> Geocentrism as well as Copernican heliocentricity take their shape from this pre-modern amalgam of science and religion. Greek-Platonic and Judaeo-Christian philosophy (so deeply rooted in theology that it is virtually impossible to distinguish two separate disciplines) share their concern about accomodating in one coherent thought for the realms of God and man. And this is the core from which these philosophies' most precious ideas evolve.

For Plato, in Timaeus, the key terms are those of the eternal maker and mortal man; those of the world of being with its unchanging ideas and forms, and the world of becoming, of fleeting immaterial phenomena. The Father or maker who is infinitely good and self-sufficient, brings forth and contains other things out of his goodness. It is indeed as the expression and part of his perfect being that imperfection in the form of the material, created world, exists. The first creatures, made by the Father himself, must by definition resemble him in everything except, of course, in their otherness:

he desired that things be as like himself as they could be.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, like God, these primordial creatures are self-sufficient (their waste, for instance, is their food) and therefore spherical in form.<sup>16</sup> And they need no limbs or sensory organs since there is nothing outside them either to approach or to observe or to hear. But in Timaeus' account this degree of otherness does not yet satisfy the maker's desire for

perfection. Beings even more unlike himself must appear: man finally enters the world, generated by the stars because the maker could not have involved himself directly with the production of a creature so removed from his wholeness and eternity. The rest of animate creation is situated so low down on the scale of being that even the stars are not instrumental in its materialization.<sup>17</sup>

Although creation in Timaeus happens in stages, the process is essentially continuous. Every creature, whether high or very low on the scale, is infused with some measure of eternity from its original source in the realm of ideas. Indeed all of creation is moved and held together by love or Eros, the force through which the two contradictory strains in the Platonic doctrine come together. For love characterizes the creator's emanation, the movement outward by which he embraces in himself everything that is outside. But love also, on the other hand, designates the inward movement of desire, the yearning with which every being is endowed to reach back into the eternal element from which it stems and of which it still has some memory, albeit the minutest of sparks. Love, then, flows perpetually joining the perfect to the imperfect and vice versa. Imperfect nature, it could be said, is thus exiled to its dark, marginal place in order to form the link with which the circle of the maker's goodness reaches for closure in perfection.

Lovejoy outlines these contradictions and follows the changing moods and beliefs of the Middle Ages and Renaissance until the beginning of the Modern Age. The contradiction at the root of Plato's doctrine could accommodate more than one interpretation. On the one hand the world of phenomena was bound in time and confused by change, and the sensory perceptions which man naively held for truth were, according to the seventh book of his Republic, nothing but the play of shadows on the metaphorical walls of a dark prison. Only through looking up to the dazzling source of light could real wisdom be found. This translated into a formula prescribing a contemplative existence which avoided the worldly scene to turn into one's self, toward the essential truths. At the same time, however, the 'idea of Goodness' with its more active disposition, which coexists in Plato's teachings with the passive, transcendental 'idea of the Good'<sup>18</sup>, never was wholly suppressed. For although the material world represented the downmost rung of the ladder

leading up to divine unity and perfection, the world had after all come into being as the manifestation of that same perfection, or, in Plotinus' words, as the sheer plenty and overflowing of the maker's goodness. This insight, quite contrary to the previous one, called for an active life as it considered it man's duty to turn to the world around him to admire its multiformity and to find in it the traces of divine essence. For although in many ways man's world was infinitely inferior to the eternal one, in its great variety or plenty it did somehow approach the divine fulness. Every material phenomenon not simply contributed to this wonderful diversity of creation, it also concealed within itself some small part of the unity from which it was born. The principle of plenitude which obtained for man the certainty of coherence and control against the horror vacui, places man in a difficult contradiction neither of which sides he can really renounce without losing the foothold in plenitude he has just gained.

Lovejoy mentions pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine as two of the greatest spokesmen of the idea of the chain.<sup>19</sup> They are also key figures in the tradition with which this thesis is concerned. But though such writers indeed share a preoccupation with the concept of plenitude and its problems, it is not until the beginning of the Renaissance that positive interest in its this-worldly aspects and implications gains decisive momentum. To signal this new attitude, Lovejoy quotes the late medieval instance of Dante and, later, of Tasso who both express their ideas about the compounded relations between God and man in the metaphor of the divine poet.<sup>20</sup> With the same purpose, Tigerstedt points rather at the work of the Florentine Academici, Ficino, Landino and Pico,<sup>21</sup> while Trinkaus conceives of this shift of emphasis as the result of earlier Humanist speculation.<sup>22</sup> However tenuous the status of such historical delimitations must remain, they are indispensable instruments for the description of changes that constitutes history.<sup>23</sup> All these are major stages in the unfolding of the notion of plenitude toward a definition of a more active, assertive role for man.

Cassirer, in treating Nicholas of Cusa's Docta Ignorantia (1440) offers another instance which bears out the transition from late Middle Ages to Renaissance particularly clearly for the purpose of this study. The word which accompanies Cusa on his journey of re-direction (for the Docta

Ignorantia was in fact written on a journey, following an experience which Cusa described as near visionary) is all:

all in God is God, all things come from his unity, and in all things he is what they are, like truth in an image. It is as if a face were reproduced in its own image<sup>24</sup>

And:

all is in each, because one degree of being cannot exist without another<sup>25</sup>

Yet it is also clear to Cusa that from his place in this world man is not in the position to scan the perfection of plenitude in its unity, that is: to see it entirely, in the manner in which it exists in (and for) God. The original of the image is not immediately visible but the image is. Hence:

we want to reach the absolute maximum through the finite (emphasis added)<sup>26</sup>

With this insight man's scope broadened significantly. Cardinal Cusa, for his own part, gave most of his efforts to the study of mathematics and geometry:

If we want to reach the absolute maximum through the finite, we must, in the first place, study finite, mathematical figures as they are<sup>27</sup>

The created world provided the mathematician-cardinal with a plethora of divine form and order, displayed through or in the language of mathematics and geometry. With the words 'If we want to reach' and with 'through the finite' Cusa placed himself outside de pale of the Middle Ages. Accents were shifting in the conception of man's place in relation to God. Here the finite and the infinite are not anymore alien to one another. As an icon of that relation, the notion of God, the holy geometer or mathematician is well known. God could also be a poet for poets, and even a magus for magi, for indeed he was involved in all and everything. The universe in its entirety was there to be converted into knowledge of the divine, a great metaphor itself, carrying (as metaphor literally signifies) the observer or reader off into the realm of the

original countenance. Plenitude was one of the conditions upon which this conversion of the visible world into transcendental knowledge could take place. Were it not for the fact that all was in all, the maker's face would not be there to be seen as signature in the world.

Lovejoy notes that plenitude is one of Robert Fludd's 'sacred words'<sup>28</sup> and he draws attention to the fact that the dramatic contradictions inherent in that notion are the generating force behind Fludd's writings. To Fludd and the other authors considered here plenitude was also the pretext for the production of copious works. The scene of the world engendered, for them, a vision of something else, something more ethereal and perfect. Hence the very attempt of representing that world had to bring about a likeness of perfection itself. Fludd's Mosaicall Philosophy and Utriusque Cosmi Historia... are good examples in point. In their weighty effort at exhaustiveness (by mimicking the plenum), their author's vocation as a kind of magus is explicit. For like Pico, who initiated a flow of texts that practised the principle of plenitude, and whose magus marries heaven to earth, Fludd took care of the reconstitution and preservation of that link by means which were peculiarly textual.

### Section three

Often the encyclopedia was the shape such plenitudinous texts took. The notion of plenitude, of the whole of creation as being disposed by and under permanent influence of the creator, was so widespread in the Renaissance world that many of its texts (and not only those calling themselves encyclopedias) evince its formative impact. And even if they are not directly identified with the Christian Cabalist tradition that took on these ideas about plenitude so resolutely, many do show signs of, for instance, a familiarity with Neoplatonism or an awareness of the Hermetic writings, important elements in that tradition. Burton refers to Ficino, Heylyn to Cusa. Many manifest a Pican facility for incorporating a variety of texts under their own 'method' (as Heylyn put it, in his preface to the Microcosmus). Unlike its modern namesake, this encyclopedia is characterized by its transcendental assumptions. Or, as Michel Foucault writes:

the form of the encyclopaedic project [was] (...) not to reflect what one knows in the neutral element of language (...) but to reconstitute the very order of the universe<sup>29</sup>

The all-inclusive text is essentially to carry man and not information. It literally informs insofar as it illuminates the eternal forms concealed in 'things', and of all things, in man. A.E.Waite, who wrote a rather favourably biased account of alchemical magic, makes a similar distinction between mere knowledge and comprehension.<sup>30</sup> Just as man, the microcosm, reflects on a small scale the rest of the world, or macrocosm, the encyclopedia, in its turn, and as a text of plenitude, reflects both micro-and macrocosm. Like natural phenomena in the worldly plenum, texts too, contain cores of resemblance with their source and original, God: to assemble them correctly would yield truth's full image.

Usually characterized by their bulk and complexity, such encyclopedic works share the assumption that science and religion cover common ground. The story of Genesis counts as history and geography, while conversely, the stars communicate divine providence. But not every encyclopedic work seeks perfection in the broad variety of Pican method. Fludd's Utriusque Cosmi does so in its attempt to encompass the arts and sciences, and so, in his way, does DuBartas in La Sepmaine. An undisputedly Christian Cabalist work like Reuchlin's De Verbo Mirifico (1494), however, concentrates on more or less one subject, but views it from a plurality of aspects so that the plenum re-enters, as it were, as structure instead of as subject matter. In this work Reuchlin introduces three speakers through whose disputation the book's argument unfolds.<sup>31</sup> Sidonius ('de schola Epicuri primum putatus' - esteemed to be the first of the Epicurean school) represents the Pagan viewpoint; Baruch adds the Jewish element and finally, to outshine and absorb the former two, Capnion speaks up for Christianity.<sup>32</sup> Bodin's Heptaplomeres employs the same popular technique but with more participants in the discussion. It has a Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran (to do justice to the complicated state of Christianity at that point in history), a Jew, a Moslem, a believer in natural religion, and finally one who thinks every religion (provided it be sincere) pertains to the real God.

Other works with a strong encyclopedic strain are the hexameral texts. They are compendious commentaries on the first chapters of Genesis, but they may also take the shape of poems or plays narrating anew and amplifying the six days of creation. The inexhaustible significance hexameral works impute to their source-text, as well as both authors' and readers' belief that yet more elaboration is required to reach the ulterior enlightenment, all feed upon similar conceptions of plenitude.

But although the encyclopedic texts are deeply indebted to a notion of 'resemblance',<sup>33</sup> of the correspondence between this world and God's essence, they are equally constituted by a notion of difference such as inspired Cusa's negative theology. The world, image of the maker, is his perfection: yet as his image it differs, and as his perfection it exceeds. As much as the plethoric, divine creation is ruled by resemblance, it is governed by difference. Likewise, on the level of text, the Renaissance encyclopedia articulates the fulness (reflected) in created being, a fulness which can never be faced in its totality (for it is perceived as reflection) and which can only be represented via 'inadequate' means of expression (an inadequacy echoed in the sense of brokenness that attends the word 'articulation' and of which more will be said later). As a project of plenitude the encyclopedia is doomed. For the ideal of plenitude is undermined by its own articulation.

Articulation may take the form of a physical ('anatomical') dissection, as in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, where the ancient Saturnine humour is studied comprehensively according to a tri-partite division, 'Philosophically, Medicinally, [and] Historically'. And while Fludd's Utriusque Cosmi uses the division between micro-and macrocosm, a host of other works such as Pico's Heptaplus as well as More's Conjectura Cabalistica and DuBartas' La Sepmaine prefer to adopt Genesis' six-day model. With the latter work, philosophical or theological articulation crosses into the realm of literature. The encyclopedia takes various literary forms of expression. Vondel and Grotius wrote hexameral drama. And though these Dutchmen are not manifestly encyclopedists the six day story has a special attraction because of its quality of 'ur-drama'. Both Corcoran and Williams<sup>34</sup> suggest the affinity between the Renaissance hexameral texts and the various encyclopedic texts mentioned here. And then there are border cases where articulation moves between fiction and

non-fiction, like the earlier mentioned debates between representatives of the faiths by Bodin and Reuchlin. Traherne's Centuries and Thanksqivings use lists of 'all things'<sup>35</sup> and their 'repetitiveness' is famous.<sup>36</sup>

But in many of these cases a clash between intention and its means of achievement is clearly visible. The ideal of inclusiveness or fulness is subverted by its realization in text through articulation and expression. The two do not easily go together. Thus, in Reuchlin's De Verbo Mirifico as well as in Pico's Heptaplus the potentially unruly plurality or variety of articulation (in the former, the debating voices; in the latter, the various extraneous texts) is given the safe semblance of unity and of ideal fulness by means of allegoresis. Every discordant voice or text is taken to reflect, in reality, something else: the overriding Christian truth. But as the following chapters on the concept of the mirror argue, allegory is finally not equal to its task and cannot but show through the difference and plurality which it has had to absorb in order to signal sameness.

#### Section four

A few instances illustrate the uneasy relations between ideal inclusiveness or fulness and its expression. DuBartas' extremely popular and long poem La Sepmaine (The Divine Weekes and Workes in Joshua Sylvester's translation) takes its encyclopedic constitution from its concern with the work of creation:

O Father, graunt I sweetly warble forth  
Unto our seed the Worlds renowned Birth:  
Graunt (Gracious God) that I record in verse  
The rarest Beauties of this Universe;<sup>37</sup>

The apparently modest design of recording (only) 'The rarest Beauties' soon transpires to stand for no less than the formidable ideal of inclusiveness. The Divine Weekes exceeds its source of inspiration in Genesis by far. It incorporates lapidaries, bestiaries, catalogues of plants, flowers and (inevitably and always) more. After having 'sweetly warbled forth' as much information as the week-structure provided by Genesis can comprehend, the poem, bursting at its seams, needs the

support of a second week for the copious overflow. This device of amplification had been used before, albeit for ostensibly different purposes, in the apocryphal Book of Jubilees, where a second week was added to the first week of creation, dedicated to such events as the birth of Eve and the insertion of much reference to the legal codex. In the Book of Jubilees, too, the reader is aware of a motive of amplification. The story of Genesis is here expanded, fulfilled in a way, especially by adding the aspect of the Law which is absent from the original version. La Sepmaine thus becomes les sepmaines and as the work grows, Genesis loses more and more of its formative grip to the passion for inclusiveness. Finally this need triumphs over Genesis' 'and God saw it was good'. Articulation concedes defeat. The Divine Weekes (like Fludd's Utriusque Cosmi, about which later) remained unfinished.

T.C.Cave, in his study of the *topos of copia*, also spots this tendency of pre-modern encyclopedic texts and calls it 'centrifugal'.<sup>38</sup> Until the encyclopedic enterprise abandoned the ideal of plenitude and its related concepts (such as *copia*), this centrifugality prevented such texts' ideal closure. Later, of course, that ideal itself became obsolete.

A different form of encyclopedic comprehensiveness was practised by the famous magus Cornelius Agrippa, whose participation in issues of plenitude is nicely, if somewhat extravagantly, caught in the following little verse quoted by C.G.Jung:

Agrippa spares no man  
He contemns, Knows, Knows not, weeps, laughs, waxes  
wroth,  
Reviles, carps at all things;  
Being himself a philosopher, demon, hero, God,  
And All things.<sup>39</sup>

Agrippa's De Occulta Philosophia (1533) (Three Books of Occult Philosophy) had rapidly gained fame, and had equally fast been opposed and challenged as a ploy to advocate the use of magic. In fact, Agrippa, in his Three Books had taken a minimum of caution against such attacks, merely claiming that he only objectively reported on these occult theories. They too had to be included, after all:

I have writ many things, rather narratively then

affirmatively<sup>40</sup>

He also, tantalizingly, maintained, though, (and this was frequently reiterated, for their own purpose, by his spiritual companions and contemporaries) that to the initiated and truly wise, his innocent text kept the most precious of secrets:

some things are even hid, and left for the search of  
the intelligent<sup>41</sup>

One imagines how some less 'understanding' readers grew suspicious. Not surprisingly, the Three Books earned Agrippa a reputation which he found it necessary to improve by the (later written but earlier published)<sup>42</sup> De Vanitate Scientiarum (1626) (Of the Vanitie and Uncertaintie of Arts and Sciences) a work no less exhaustive in its way. Walker places De Vanitate in the rhetorical category of declamatio invectiva: it is a set piece and 'by no means all of its destructive scepticism is meant to be taken in earnest'.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Blau mentions how relatively short-lived the period of renunciation in which Agrippa produced this work was. Soon after De Vanitate he resumed his occult interests.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the book's onslaught on the arts and sciences responds obediently to the demands of plenitude in its nearly systematic thoroughness. Moreover, the earlier, though inexplicably later published, product of youthful sin together with its, however cynical, denial constitute a couple of compilations that make a different bid for perfection. Here the pressures of the encyclopedic enterprise transcend the literary or scientific effort to become, through the supplementarity of two texts, the consummation of a personal history.

Erasmus, in his highly satirical Laus Stultitiae (1511) (Praise of Folly), had been more perceptive about the ambiguities that attend the attainment (or disavowal) of complete knowledge. The Praise of Folly is a 'traditional [encomium] of an unexpected, unworthy, or indefensible subject' and one aspect 'of the end of this encomium -and of many others in the genre- is that it has no formal ending,'<sup>45</sup> a trait which it shares with other texts composed according to the principles of plenitude. Frances Yates has shown, comparing Agrippa to Erasmus, that the latter, like the former, rejected the arts and sciences and also never '[threw] away his scholarship'.<sup>46</sup> The Praise of Folly plays upon such ambivalences

through its ironic approach. Written, like Cusa's best known work as a pastime on a journey, it is, among all these long-winded books, especially conspicuous for its succinctness. Yet its method is clearly germane to that of the usually much longer encyclopedic text. The small book mimicks fatter and heavier compendia of knowledge as it, conversely, is dedicated to the praise of Folly herself. The Praise ridicules these voluminous books through its progressive, ironic realization of the impossibility of the perfection they are all so avidly seeking to attain. Folly praises her own famous traits so copiously that she forces herself into a volte face as, paradoxically, the distinction between herself and knowledge gets more and more eroded. Thus a game of eclipses between notions of ignorance and wisdom unfolds that prevents the text from prolonging itself. These exchanges between wisdom and folly are increasingly outrageous. In his upside-down invective, Erasmus, the theologian, does not even eschew equating his own religion with folly. In a section on wisdom and good sense, Folly herself reveals the principle of reversal that governs the text. And as she proceeds with her task the growing sense of equivocation (folly is wisdom) reaches such height and intensity that her own purpose is defeated. Folly has turned into wisdom and vice versa. The more exhaustively the one's case is made, the less it (or 'she') retain any distinctive, articulate features.

Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy finally represents another of the cruxes of inclusiveness. Even though it is not a classical encyclopedic text,<sup>47</sup> Melancholy, the disease about which Burton wrote his most famous work, could well be viewed as an encyclopedic affliction. The Saturnine humour, rooted in the nature of the god Kronos who, according to Klibansky et al., 'might fairly be described as god of opposites',<sup>48</sup> stood for creation as well as destruction, for joy and sadness, visionary inspiration and worldly dullness. The positive element in melancholy was taken up and emphasized by Neoplatonism, was later superseded by medieval stress on its opposite quality,<sup>49</sup> and was finally revived in the Renaissance, especially through the work of Ficino, in the notion of the melancholy man of genius.<sup>50</sup> In its dual-facedness, its gazing up and down at once, the melancholic condition illustrates how man cannot look downward without finding himself pulled in the opposite direction.

Unfortunately, melancholy also meant that he could not direct himself heavenward, either, without submitting to his worldly, human limitations.

Burton's book, fittingly, is of great compass and deals thoroughly with the state of the psyche: through the story of the first man's sin as well as through chapters on witchcraft and devils, and through the description of diets as well as the analysis of the faculties of the soul. Another of the traits of the all-encompassing text is, of course, that in it the domains of heaven and earth join, in this case, Burton's original vocation of divinity with medicine. Born under the sign of Saturn, the writer speaks of himself as being appropriately endowed with 'a running wit, an unconstant, unsettled mind'<sup>51</sup> which made him into 'aliquis in omnibus, nullus in singulis'<sup>52</sup> -someone who knows something about everything but nothing about anything in particular. But on the other hand, Burton was also of an opposite inclination to retire, and possessed a certain unworldliness that caused him to identify with Democritus, the melancholy solitary. The roving humour and the more heavy-hearted part of his temperament contradict and balance one another exactly as they should in the melancholic condition.

This paradoxical balance clarifies Burton's perhaps somewhat engimatic lines in 'To the Reader', where he speaks of his reason for writing the Anatomy:

I write of melancholy, by being busy to avoid  
melancholy.<sup>53</sup>

Behind these words is not simply a literary sleight or cleverness. The double (inclusive) nature of melancholy makes it into a condition of fulness which, can, by definition, only be treated or avoided by more of the same. This form of therapy, necessitated by the nature of plenitude, is reminiscent of Paracelsan medicine which similarly treated disease with 'more of the same'. It is superfluous to add how closely Theophrastus Bombastus Paracelsus' theories were linked with those of the Christian Cabalists.

Melencolia, drawn by Duerer, sits surrounded with ladder and measuring tools, the instruments that may lead her, respectively, up to heaven and down to natural phenomena. As such she is associated with the writer of the Mosaicall Philosophy and Utriusque Cosmi Historia whose concern

is so much to accomplish fulness through the survey of both cosmi. In Fludd's work the above 'symptoms' of the text of plenitude are found back: the allegorization and repetitiveness of expression, the problem of closure, as well as the question of more of the same. This is now considered more closely.

Chapter two Fludd's All

Section one

Robert Fludd was born in Bearstead, Kent, in 1574. Thomas, his father, had been knighted during the reign of Queen Elizabeth and his son proudly used his right to bear arms.<sup>1</sup> The younger Fludd studied at St John's College, Oxford, where he became Doctor of Medicine in 1605. He also travelled in Europe, studying and teaching there for six years before returning to take his degree.<sup>2</sup> Then he opened a practice as a physician in London's Fenchurch Street. Fuller comments:

His books written in Latin are great, many, and mystical. The last some impute to his charity, clouding his high matter with dark language, lest otherwise the lustre thereof should dazzle the understanding of the reader. The same phrases he used to his patients; and seeing conceit is very contributive to the well working of physic, their fancy or faith natural was much advanced by his elevated expressions.<sup>3</sup>

While to some modern readers this may seem a doubtful compliment, Fuller's tone is evidence of his seriousness. In fact, the notion that 'conceit is very contributive to the well working of physic' is not so unusual in the period. In Vaughan's translation of Nollius' Hermetical Physick it is advocated emphatically:

Let him [the patient] certainly believe that there is communicated and infused (by the gift of God) into the medicine which he hath taken, such an innate vertue as is effectual and proper to expell his Disease<sup>4</sup>

and

A firm credulity, chearfull hope and true love and confidence towards the Physician, and the Medicine, (...) conduce as much to the health of the Patient, yea sometimes more, then either the remedy or the Physician.<sup>5</sup>

Burton, too, in the Anatomy of Melancholy, confirms the importance of the role of the imagination, both as regards the cause and the cure of a disease.<sup>6</sup> Nollius' text, in addition, shows that it is considered equally necessary for the physician himself to believe:

Every Physician (...) must be a sound Christian and truly religious and holy<sup>7</sup>

Although Fludd's speculative work may have contributed to the flourishing of his practice, it did cause him trouble with his candidacy for the Royal College of Physicians. Initially Fludd failed several times but his unrelenting effort was eventually rewarded. He even came to take honorary offices in the venerable institution.

Fludd is described by Craven as a man of 'great personal sanctity', 'at all a faithful and attached member of the Church of England',<sup>8</sup> and Fuller, too, uses admiring words: 'a deep philosopher and a great physician'.<sup>9</sup> According to the former, Fludd was also blessed with 'a voracious appetite for the marvelous' which made him an extremely well and widely read doctor. S.Hutin says:

Il acquit bientôt une culture immense, réalisant le type du savant universel tel que l'avait incarné Pic de la Mirandole<sup>10</sup>

Fludd possibly got to know Michael Maier,<sup>11</sup> the great German representative of the secret Rosicrucian society, and became himself widely known as its English proponent. Hutin compares him not only with Pico as the homo universalis, but also with Doctor Faust, the archetypal magus:

réalisant le type du philosophe tel que se le représente la tradition populaire, il commençait à passer, aux yeux de certains, pour un sorcier, pour un nouveau Docteur Faust.<sup>12</sup>

Fludd published most of his work outside England and explains why:

our home-borne printers demanded of me five hundred pounds to print the first volume, and to find the cuts in copper; but beyond the seas, it was printed at no cost of mine, and that as I would wish.

And I had 16 copies sent me over, with 40 pounds in gold, as an unexpected gratuitie for it.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the German De Bry family, responsible for the printing of a major part of his publications, also published Michael Maier's works, and thus, conceivably provided a congenial atmosphere for Fludd's texts.

These works were, of course, controversial.

Beaucoup de ces ouvrages firent scandale à leur parution, et firent l'effet d'une apologie des hérésies gnostiques et du manichéisme: en Espagne et en Italie, l'autorité fit même saisir les livres par la police.<sup>14</sup>

Nor was their reception in England satisfactory.

His works are for the English to slight or admire, for French and foreigners to understand and use; not that I account them more judicious than our own countrymen, but more inquiring into such difficulties. The truth is, here at home his books are beheld not so good as crystal, which (some say) are prized as precious pearls beyond the seas.<sup>15</sup>

Yet at the time when Paracelsus' ideas were viewed with some interest by the medical establishment,<sup>16</sup> Fludd, unsurprisingly, was not considered quite a Fremdkörper. John Webster's admiration for Fludd is quoted in a later chapter; William Lilly, too, referred to him favourably<sup>17</sup> and Theodore Haak is said to have felt no sympathy with Marin Mersenne's attempts to discredit Fludd.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, judging from the attention he earned from such foreign celebrities as Mersenne, Fludd was taken seriously, if not often favourably. Mersenne first attacked Fludd's works in his commentary on Genesis (1623). When Fludd responded, Gassendi took on Mersenne's defense against that response.<sup>19</sup>

However much consternation or interest Fludd aroused in his own time, after his death in 1637 as a heirless bachelor, he was soon forgotten. There have not been new editions of his works after those that appeared in the 17th century. His work proved marginal when measured against the wave of scientific enterprise with which the modern era took off. Yet

recent historians of early science like Allen Debus find affinities between Fludd's theosophy and the developing science of the 17th century. Debus concludes:

there was a chemical dream in the Renaissance (...) a search for our Creator through his created works by chemical investigations and analogies<sup>20</sup>

and among the thinkers whose disenchantment with the Aristotelianism of the scholastic universities resulted in this empirical study of nature, he includes William Gilbert, William Harvey, Bacon, as well as Fludd. Fludd, though, it would seem, put too great a wager on the aforesaid analogies and missed the boat that carried the true scientific potential into modernity. Yet clearly great forefather-scientists like Kepler and Newton did sometimes preserve this dangerous and old fashioned bond between science and religion, too. In its particular way of keeping these two realms together Fludd's work is worth more attention than it has been given so far.

Of his works, the Mosaicall Philosophy (1659) (though in its length it does not compare to a fraction of Utriusque Cosmi Historia (1617-1621), Fludd's opus magnum) represents in its more compressed form the substance of Fludd's ideas. It is, together with the short, polemical Answer to M. Foster his only work in the English language. Though it was published post-humously by Humphrey Moseley, its title-page may indicate that Fludd himself prepared the English translation.

MOSAICALL PHILOSOPHY: Grounded upon the Essentiall Truth or Eternal Sapience, written first in Latin, and afterwards thus rendered into English by Robert Fludd, Esq. & Doctor of Physick.

The decision to translate this work and not the far more ambitious and diffuse Utriusque Cosmi Historia appears to have been a wise one. And the latter work's unfinished state would, in any case, have hindered such an enterprise.

In the following section the Mosaicall Philosophy is studied fairly closely although Utriusque Cosmi Historia is Fludd's encyclopedic masterpiece. To follow Fludd's ideas about the all in the former text and

then turn to the latter so as to see how these resulted in a history of both macro- and microcosm is a compromise that tries to do justice to both Fludd's comparative succinctness in the one work and his contribution to the encyclopedic effort of the Renaissance in the other.

### Section two

The all, another name for the concept of plenitude, runs like a main artery through Fludd's texts:

The intensity which saw the hand of God in everything and his sacred presence generating, preserving, and controlling all in an absolute nearness and actual filling of all in all, was the key to Fludd's character and writing<sup>21</sup>

Sometimes, in his writings, the all is employed to defuse accusations of cacomagy (black magic). Thus it is inconceivable for Fludd that a 'weapon-salve', proven to heal, would be controlled by any agency but the divine. Since God 'operateth all in all'<sup>22</sup> this too must happen with his approval. At other times the inclusiveness of the all is invoked for less risky purposes. The writer of the Mosaicall Philosophy (MP) appoints it as his source of inspiration even in the preface which he opens with the two great commonplaces of the plenum, the ladder and the chain:

If the office of of [sic] Jacobs Ladder, was for Souls and Angels, to ascend from the Earth unto Heaven, and to descend from Heaven unto Earth, and that by many steps or degrees, corresponding to both the Elementary and ethereall or Heavenly nature: Or (as the Poet, speaking mystically), If the chain of Nature hath its highest and last link, fastned unto the foot of Jupiter's chair in Heaven, as the lower is fixed on Earth (MP, 'To the Reader')

-if this all be so, the 'bright Essence of the Creator' or the 'true Wisdom in this World' may be attained in a twofold manner, namely, through 'theology' as well as through 'philosophy'. The former pointeth directly at the sincere and simple nature,

(...), making her demonstration a Priori, as if for the proof of a Circle's existence, one should begin his inquisition from the formal Center or middle-point, and so proceed unto the Circumference (Ibid.)

while philosophy, the latter, 'quasi demonstratione a posteriori' is 'to (...) search into its internall Center' only 'from the externall of the creature, or organ' (Ibid.). The plenitude of creation warrants this traffic up and down the ladder, God's 'temporal creatures' contain his wisdom:

the true Philosopher must acknowledg his essentiall science (...) to proceed radically from the Eternall God by his aeviall or Angelicall Spirits, into his temporall creatures, I mean the Stars, Winds, Elements, Meteors, and perfect mixed bodies; (ibid.)

As a consequence, he will be able to perceive:

the aeviall essence in the temporall beeing; but also (...) a centrall mover and Eternall Spirit in the aeviall, by the which the temporall or corporeall creature, is immediatly vivified and agitated: (...) God is essentially one and all. (ibid.)

In its title the Mosaicall Philosophy suggests that it is concerned with the movement upward from the world: philosophy. For that purpose it is divided into two sections both of which deal with what seems to be the mundane business of empirical experiments. The first refers to the 'Weather- or Calendar-glasse' (MP, p.6), a simple, perfectly valid experiment reminiscent of Boyle's law; and the second to 'Magneticall Experiments' (MP, p.127). Yet the work immediately loses its straightforward 'philosophical' direction in a confusion of disciplines. This is apparent, even in Fludd's opening statement:

#### The Argument of the First Book

[The Author] made election of an Invention, of Spirituall conclusion, commonly termed by the name of the Weather- or Calendar-glasse, that by the ocular and practicall experiments thereof, he might evidently demonstrate unto the world's eye, the fals hood of the transitory, and fading wisdom or Philosophy of the Ethnicks; and

confirm or maintain the truth of that, which is grounded upon the eternall Spirit of Sapience (MP, p.1)

Further on, in the second section, 'all Magneticall sorts of curing' are introduced as only one manifestation or confirmation of '(...) Sympathy, or concupisuble Attraction and Coition' (MP, p.127). The 'a posteriori' experiments get inextricably confused with the a priori, theological or spiritual laws which they come to prove. As, finally, 'All things go in pairs', distinctions like that between two ways of attaining Knowledge are of only modest relevance. The title page to the second section declares thus with full spiritual splendour:

Omnia Duplicia, unum contra unum, et non fecit quicquam deesse  
(MP, p.127)

All things go in pairs, one the opposite of the other:  
he has caused nothing to be wanting

And to the same effect, Fludd admits that

true Philosophy, (...) is nothing else in effect but Theology (MP, p.34)

and that the distinction is only made 'for fashions sake' (MP, ibid.). So even from the start the Mosaicall Philosophy asserts the 'Mosaicall' or theological half of its title to counterbalance or supplement its philosophical element. The experiment in physics constitutes one way of translating the worldly and manifold to the level of universal law or eternal wisdom. The weather-glass is an 'artificiall vessell' but:

Yea verily, and I averre boldly, that the whole World, or worldly Round, is as well and compleatly stuffed or filled with spirit or aire, as is <sup>this</sup> <sub>our</sub> artificiall vessell, (MP, p. )

Fludd conceives the small space in the vessel to be analogous to 'that naturall fabrick or organ of the world' (MP, pp.7-8). This results in predominantly theosophical speculation: speculation in which theology and philosophy are not anymore the distinct areas suggested earlier. And the same is true for the second section where the 'Magnes' (magnet) serves as a figure in which worldly interest or curiosity and supernatural yearning deposit their contradictory energies. Once their rules of distribution in

the plenum are given, natural phenomena like thunder and lightning and the rising and falling of the tides, are understood in the spirituality that informs their material occurrence. And this same spirituality connects them with the events in the weatherglass. The weatherglass is brought to bear not as an experiment but as proof or illustration. It does not add new knowledge, but it is more information in the literal sense: a tangible (albeit small scale) embodiment of God's full presence.

In all this, Fludd is indebted to an extensive range of thinkers and their theories of creation: Hermes Trismegistus as well as Plato and Pythagoras; Paracelsus, Reuchlin, Agrippa, Pico, and probably indirectly (through Reuchlin especially) Cabala.<sup>23</sup> This is the usual Christian Cabalist choice and variety: Moses, Christian Cabalism's first inspiratus, was believed to have received (besides the written Law) the hidden wisdom which incorporated all these doctrines. Like Pico, Fludd stands in an allegorical tradition. Allegory, after all, in its openendedness, yields more than one meaning<sup>24</sup> and is, in this quality, the literary practice of the principle of plenitude. It is the medium of the inspired voice and it articulates creation's (or the text's) full yet multiple meaning. Thus for Fludd the New Testament is:

Theology, under whose typicall or graphicall instruction, the hidden spirit doth lurk (MP, p.18)

and this principle of hidden information applies for pagan texts like Plato's or the Corpus Hermeticum, or, on the other hand, those of the Jewish Cabalists:

By this therefore we Christians may see, that the very Pagans did grant or acknowledge, that which the Scriptures do testifie, though it be by an allegoricall way, (MP,p.142)

In the Mosaicall Philosophy the story of creation is expounded through a variety of metaphors: in terms of numbers (Pythagoras), of elements (Plato), of darkness and light (Hermes), of alchemy (Paracelsus) and of divine characters (Cabala). While using this Pican community of texts Fludd arrives at his theosophy of the weatherglass. Through the application of the rules of analogy he can select the convenient

Hermetic, Paracelsan or Pythagorean terms to establish the big analogy, the one between the microcosm in the glass and the universe as a whole.

Fludd does not, usually, keep these figural levels apart but he does observe, on one occasion at least, their separate or parallel existence. There he composes a list in which he systematically derives Aristotle's, Plato's, Hermes', Pythagoras' and Hippocrates' cosmogonies 'from Moses his Principles' (MP, pp.42-43). He takes a number of key notions from Genesis' first chapter and matches each with an ordered list of counterparts in the various pagan philosophies. But they do not, finally, stay separate. Fludd can incorporate these texts because (he says in connection with pagan doctrines) their authors have committed an 'egregious theft (...) from Moses his Principles'. This author does nothing less than restore the truth to its proper owner.

The Mosaicall Philosophy constitutes a web of relevances: everything is linked to everything in and through the plenum. Fludd constructs his syncretistic model of creation by means of various metaphors, from the familiar creation ex nihilo, to more obscure notions like contraction, condensation and rarefaction, identity and alterity. According to the most prevalent Judaeo-Christian cosmogony, creation is from nothing. On this point Fludd does not quite agree with Aristotle who had objected that:

Ex nihilo nihil fit (MP, p.44).

Nothing comes from nothing

To this, Fludd replies that

Genesis Nihil is not such a negative Nothing (ibid.)

for:

it is evident, that the things which fall under mans sense and kenning, were not at the first subject to mans sense, and therefore were esteemed as if they were not.

(MP, p.46)

Before creation everything existed, but enfolded in unity, undifferentiated within the eternal being. The way in which things became apparent to man is analogous to man's becoming apparent himself and to himself: in creation. Fludd's answer to Aristotle is an attempt to cross the divide between the immaterial nature of God and created matter. That divide is not easily crossed, and Fludd's solution places him in an ostensibly materialist tradition. The ex Deo theory which Fludd espouses is, however, not strictly a materialist one. Fludd's concept of matter is a spiritual one.<sup>25</sup> Matter and spirit are not essentially different for him. Hence God can be shown to create 'matter' without making him thereby into a materialist God. However, the result of Fludd's description of the nothing as not so 'negative' because simply not yet visible or 'subject to mans sense', is that that divine, original area nevertheless remains conceptually remote because of the unresolved epistemological divide. For such an area is, by Fludd's own definition, discursively neither knowable nor namable, and undifferentiated. Things are swallowed into non-particularity, into the nothing 'which is not such a negative Nothing'. The Mosaicall Philosophy illustrates how this conception of creation leads to the allegorical practices that are so typical of Christian Cabalist texts.

In the beginning, then, there is the nothing that contains all in potency (potentia divina) as well as in act (actus divinus) (MP, p.45): it is a coexistence of darkness and light. Or, according to the Pythagorean arithmetical model:

the principall pattern in the minde of the builder or creator of things, which were to be created. (P.46)

Or again:

[that] which the Cabalists express by Aleph tenebrosum, and lucidum. (ie. the dark and bright Aleph) (ibid.)

In this state preceding the creation, the antithetical pairs of darkness and light, matter and spirit, passivity and activity, are still locked together in unity. Only in and through a first movement of separation, also described (via Cabalist theory) as a contraction, does creation

commence. In this movement God becomes manifest (now in Hermetic terms) as inside and outside:

Deus est circulus intellectualis, cuius centrum est omne illud quod est, circumferentia vero extra omnia;

God is an intellectual circle whose centre is all that exists and

. whose circumference is beyond everything

(MP, p.48)

Or again, later on:

The center of all things whose circumference is no where;

(MP, p.136)

The first dissociation that brings about this distinction between inside and outside happens through a contraction in the internal being wherein certain divine qualities come to form the centre or core to a periphery of the remaining qualities. The centre consists of heat and light (energy), the circumference is of a cold and dark (passive) nature. Reuchlin is mentioned in the margin as the source of the Cabalist element (contraction or tsimtsum) in this explanation, as well as Hermes (for cold as 'essentiall act'):

And in verity, cold is an essentiall act, proceeding from (...) the divine puissance, Which in this property doth contract its beams from the circumference into its self (MP, p.53)

The text here is rather obscure: 'This property' refers to the 'divine puissance' and not, as the awkward syntax might suggest, to 'cold'. It should not be inferred that cold itself is an act (it is in fact pure passivity). The point is here that 'cold', the peripheral atmosphere, derives from the act of the divine essence just as does 'heat', which remains central. Further on in the first section Fludd exploits Cabala more fully:

(...) as if we should say, that the humid nature of the heavens being contracted in their centre, is illuminated with a double proportion of the divine emanation streaming down, or flowing from the Sephiroth or Cabalisticall numeration, called Tiphereth or

pulchritude and beauty. Whereby it is argued, that this heavenly mass is made a Tabernacle for the Spirituall Sun or beauteous and divine Spirit of Light, not that it includeth it, (MP, p.63)

Again Fludd's language is opaque. 'Being contracted' is intended for 'the heavens', so that the entire passage would read: the humid nature of [that part of] the heavens that was left outside, while another part was contracted into the [heavens'] centre.

The lack of clarity on these two occasions in a work the subject matter of which, anyhow, does not vouchsafe the most lucid of texts, is symptomatic or even possibly intended. Especially where the author describes the occult, very first stages of creation, language proves to be alien and unamenable to its object. Fludd's text could be viewed not so much as crisis in the face of the impossible, but rather as an acknowledgement of this impossibility. The convoluted sentences reveal how words can do nothing but fold in upon themselves. Attributes are not quite easily referred and sources are played out against each other within the space of one, not even very long, line.

In the process of creation, the second step after contraction or separation is a downpour, an overflowing or emanation of light (or heat) from the contracted core into the dark, cold space outside. This emanation of essential light (in Neoplatonic and Cabalist terms; Hermetism tends to speak about 'inspiration') through its interaction with the humid nature brings about the material universe:

it was said eternall wisdome, or spirit Elohim, who acting as it were the part of a mid-wife, did deliver, and bring forth this birth; and gave it act and form. (MP, p.47)

The 'spirit Elohim' is the 'Ruach Elohim', Hebrew for (Fludd correctly translates) 'the spirit of the Lord'. This mediating emanation of 'eternall wisdome' is also conceived as Christ on an earlier occasion:

because in Christ only, is all the treasure of wisdom and science hid. (MP, p.12)

Through him the all is created. But in fact, the Mosaicall Philosophy only minimally mentions Christ as the creating, mediating agent or, for

that matter, in any other role. It prefers to speak broadly, in the syncretistic manner of Pico and Ficino, about the Word or Logos, the Son's pre-Christian parallel.<sup>26</sup> For example:

Plato had the knowledge of the Word, and had read the Books of Moses (MP, p.42)

In this Word the various doctrines of creation are assembled and put into the allegorical community of texts:

And yet, as for Plato and Hermes, I must excuse them, being that they<sup>do</sup> both of them acknowledg in express terms with Moses, that the matter or substance whereof the heavens and <sup>the</sup> earth were made, was a humid nature, and the internall form or act, which did dispose of it into diversity of figures or forms, was the divine Word, as you may find most plainly expressed in Plato's works, and in the Pimander of Hermes (MP, p.43)

Rather than using the other models made available through his allegorical recruitment of the Word (such as the Cabalist Sephirot, mentioned only briefly in this section), Fludd is especially concerned with translating creation into processes of 'rarefaction and condensation', the various mixtures and motions of the elements, winds and meteors. These afford a more fitting vocabulary for the physical experiment with the weatherglass, which is his central illustration.

The first elements are water and 'air' (or spirit: the Hebrew ruach can mean either wind, air or spirit):

it is plainly argued that waters were the materiall principle being created or inacted by the spirit of the Lord, or Elohim Ruach: (MP, p.47)

And the spirit settles in, and then is transmitted by:

an infinity of Organs, as Angels, Sun, Moon, Stars, Winds, fire, etc. (MP, p.56-57)

As he moves from centre to circumference, Fludd disposes of his various measures of materiality and spirituality. Heat and cold communicate their qualities to the Divine Spirit who thus takes the shape of the hot southerly and the cold northerly winds. They also meet with and act upon the 'humid nature' which consequently becomes

that main subject of Condensation and Rarefaction, by the means whereof, all things in this world are made to differ from one another, and are disposed and ordered by God, according to weight, number, and measure, in their proper ranks and places;  
(MP, p.58)

In that order, the sun is central, a receptacle in mid-air of the Divine Spirit, who distributes the Spirit to the lower echelons of the world. The sun is

seat of the all-creating and universal Spirit in this world  
(MP, p.60)

But although the descent from centre to periphery is ostensibly ordered, it is basically:

nothing else but a four-fold changing, and mutation of one and the same catholick element, or humid nature, (MP, p.70)

-caused by the emanation of divine light. In the upper regions of heaven creatures are formed consisting mainly of spirit: the angels. Lower down the planets, and especially the sun, receive the light, and finally some of it is deposited in the dense cold matter of earthly existence. But essentially:

God had filled all things in this world with his Spirit,  
(MP, p.52)

and therefore all things are not only in continuous touch with his essence, but they are also reconvertible into the primal unity. This possibility has special significance for man who can effect his own re-assumption into spiritual unity. While the rest of creation participates willessly in a natural cycle of condensation and rarefaction, man

by purification and separation of the corruptible additaments,  
(MP, p.76)

can 'put off' these material encumbrances. In this human capacity for purification and separation the initial divine movement of contraction is repeated. Man separates his spiritual from his bodily nature through a centripetal motion which brings his spark of divine essence into correspondence with its source. The dark enveloping material is left outside. The way this happens is of minor concern in Fludd's treatise, but it is clear that man's contraction, like God's, is accompanied by an opposite, expulsive movement. The Mosaical Philosophy, in fact, formally imitates this antithetical dynamic by combining theology (inward) and philosophy (outward) into theosophy.

Besides these terms of separation, condensation and rarefaction, Fludd also uses the more abstract notions of identity and alterity to describe the first act. God, needless to say, is whole and self-sufficient from eternity:

God is free and voluntary in his actions, being that he was of himself, and did exist without any respect had unto any other, either precedent or coeternal principle from all beginning, and therefore was sufficient in himself<sup>(..)</sup>, from all eternity (MP, p.79)

But after the onset of creation, with the first separation, something changes, and God becomes 'identity':

namely, an absolute, simple, pure, and increated essence,  
(MP, p.91)

while the 'Angell', representing early created nature,  
is by the wiser Rabbies termed Alteritas, to wit, as he is  
compacted of the uniform inspiration of God, and the humid or aery  
nature of the world, (ibid.)

This notion of 'alterity' is further explained:

that it is a creature, is most certain, because it is not Identity,  
but Alterity; for if it were Identity, it would be the divine unity  
or essence, and consequently it would not be created.

(MP, pp.148-49)

The transition (as with the not so negative Nothing) that accounts for creation, can be imagined as one from absence of identity -and, for that matter, absence of alterity-, to identity and alterity, to visibility and invisibility. And yet, the transition is no more than more of the same: the manifestation of what has always been. In order to be seen, in fact: in order to see, one (even the One) needs an other. Hermes Trismegistus who played such an important role in Fludd's thought has the splendid image of a God creating the First Man for want of someone to admire him. According to Nock and Festugière, Hermetic archetypical man is:

image de son Père, en qui le Père aime sa propre forme<sup>27</sup>

Creation begins in repetition, reproduction of the same in the eye of an other.<sup>28</sup> First there is a kind of stutter, 'I...eye', the inaudible difference between identity and alterity. The dissociation into visible and invisible, like the one between pre-creation nothing and the created something, is simultaneously radical and only gradual. In the world, God faces nothing but himself as other. What becomes visible in or through creation is therefore not the same, but rather the visibility of (its) identity in difference or alterity. Or: a word gets spoken from the eternal silence that articulates this silence in repeating its own difference as word. The visible and audible world in which author, text and readers are placed together is bond as well as bound. They are all linked to God in the continuum of his emanation. Yet each, too, is bound and limited, defined by virtue of the difference through which they attain visibility and become audible. This contradiction is reflected in Fludd's text when he finally and openly points at something like a conceptual, Cusan gap between the human and the divine minds. The notion is difficult because of the senses of continuity and separation which it is obliged to convey at once. Fludd manages it by working into the fragment of text concepts like infinity and vacancy, meant to outline a primary, metaphysical substratum upon which 'plaine English', 'mans capacity and ingeny', occur as transitory, disparate and superficial incidents or images, which succeed only partially to invoke the fulness at the base. Only indirectly, by unsettling these contingent images, some sense of the all might be gathered:

(...) this mysticall infinity, when it was thus bewrapped in the gloomy clew, or profound abyssse of darknesse, and remained as if it were vacant, or resting in its self, without any action, or (as they say) having regard or respect unto nothing, was therefore termed in Hebrew *נֹהַ*: that is to say, Nihil, Non Finis, Non Ens, and, in plain English, Nothing at all in our imagination, because the tenuity and poverty of man's capacity and ingeny <sup>in the</sup> regard of Divine things is such, that it is accustomed to judge and imagine that not to be or exist at all, which appeareth not manifestly unto the sight: (MP, p.132)

Through small, subversive interjections like 'as if it were vacant' and 'that is to say, Nihil', as well as by an unexpected turn like

and in plaine English, Nothing at all  
in our imagination

Fludd's text unsettles itself in its striving for optimal exactness.

If the Mosaicall Philosophy, in its adumbration of theology and philosophy, through its many superimposed layers of metaphor, and by its dual-directedness at both heaven and earth, seems to want to mirror God's plenum, it cannot exempt itself from participation in that fulness. It is fated to pronounce its own limits as text, and this happens in a way characteristic of Christian Cabalist writings in general. There is no trace of reticence and resignation in the face of their predicament of having to represent divine fulness through linguistic imperfection.<sup>29</sup> Instead, the Mosaicall Philosophy energetically assembles and combines, puts the process of creation into a variety of terms and contexts, and attempts to express and illustrate new analogies between heaven and earth. This practice results in a text that tries the reader's patience at the same time that it excites, confuses and varies. There is an understandable lack of sympathy and patience for the confused aspect of the work in many of Fludd's readers.<sup>30</sup> The Mosaicall Philosophy's many repetitions are patently tedious, yet as they occur in different contexts they also interestingly introduce new levels of discourse. The repetitions are the structure upon which a substantial number of generically various writings coexist. Apart from the theological and

philosophical (scientific) writing, there are anecdotes, rhetoric and polemic, as well as mystical passages.

One major repetition in the Mosaical Philosophy is in the shape of its entire second section. This repetition did not escape Saurat who included it in his brief discussion of Fludd's gifts as a writer.<sup>31</sup> But instead of studying the quality of the texts in relation to the doctrines they represent, he considers them as transparent sources of information about Christian Cabalism. The possible connection between the stylistically and aesthetically awkward repetitiveness and these doctrines eludes him:

Comme écrivain, Fludd est sans mérite d'aucune sorte. Non seulement il n'a aucune élégance ni aucune force dans le style, mais les principes les plus élémentaires de la composition lui sont inconnus.<sup>32</sup>

Examples of this lack of elegance, according to Saurat, are complication, disorder and repetition:

Il se recommence constamment<sup>33</sup>

About this he later adds (speaking of the bi-partite structure of the Mosaical Philosophy):

De même dans sa Philosophie Mosaique, ne se sentant pas satisfait de sa première partie, il recommence dans une seconde partie, et d'un point de vue qui n'est même pas différent, tout ce qu'il avait déjà exposé.<sup>34</sup>

From the perspective of the present chapter this second section does not redundantly repeat, but offers one more opportunity to improve or amplify the imperfect image of perfection. And Fludd does take a different 'point de vue'. In this second part the dynamics of the creature is formulated in terms of sympathy and antipathy, an extensive exposition of the Cabalist 'Sephiroticall Tree' (MP, pp173ff), and the theophysics of the loadstone. There is no repetition without difference: section two turns away from the earlier physical and elemental vocabulary to one that represents creation as redemption and mystical unification. Love and concord tie similar things, and, pre-eminently, the creator and his human

image. The sephirot supply a holy language which articulates creation's divine significance:

And there are some ~~that~~ will not shrink to say, that all <sup>the</sup> Species or Kinds of creatures, were expressed in and by the 22. Hebrew letters, not those externall ones which are vulgarly painted out with Ink or Art, which are but shadows; but the fiery formall and bright spirituall letters which were engraven on the face or superficies of the dark hyles, by the fiery word of the eternall Speaker in the beginning, and therefore they are tearm'd originally Elementa quasi Hylementa, or Elements; as engraven in the forehead of the dark abyss'e or Hyle, and by reason of the essence of that divine Word, which received the mystery of the Typicall creation, and did trace it out after the Archetypical pattern, and delineated it in characters of formall fire, the language which was framed out of it was called Lingua Sancta, a language (I say) much spoken by the learned Rabbies of our age, but little known or understood by them, and yet of an infinite importance, (MP, p.161)

In the new terms of the second section, the first separation makes visible the female and male elements through a dramatization of Genesis as sexual play. In Cabala final restitution is conceived as the reunion of the male divine essence with his female counterpart in exile, the Shekhina.<sup>35</sup> Their separation and mutual yearning is behind the following metaphor of creation:

(...) we may discern still, that there is but one Eternall Unity, which in itself is male and female, and all that can be imagined, which of himself, and in himself produceth all things, no otherwise then Adam contained in himself Eve (MP, p.140)

Matter, in this scheme of things, is female, impregnated by 'masculine' emanation, or illuminating spirit/ (MP, p.130) . The relationship between those two elements is dual. From their initial coexistence in unity they attract one another sympathetically. But from their separate status in creation they repel one another as well in antipathy. The entire world depends on these powers, the order of the stars as well as the growth and decay of the smallest plants:

(...) we ought not to make any scruple in affirming that all things

in this world (...) do emit beams unto one another (...) by the imitation of the starrs, from whence they are derived: (MP, p.185)

And besides this world-constituting mutuality of love and hate, these forces even convert into the notion of a universal heartbeat when they appear as systole and diastole (MP, p.148). These relationships find tangible expression in the loadstone or magnet:

We find (...) in the Load-stone, all the passions, as well sympathetricall as antipathetricall, which do affect his mother earth; for it hath <sup>his</sup> Poles with the earth, and it escheweth all in conformity with the earth, it flyeth from that which is contrary unto its nature. (...)

Lo, here is contained the sum of all mysticall or hidden sympathy or antipathy in the world, (MP, p.199)

Hence Fludd names the magnet 'Terrella' or little earth. A rather worldly application of these qualities is the weapon-salve. Fludd presents its dramatic effects in the Answer to M. Foster. In this anecdote human flesh attracts human flesh through a feat of sympathetical medicine: the master whose nose has come off in an accident buys the consent of his slave to have the latter's arm bound to the place where his own nose used to be. It is only a matter of time for the nose to grow back from the flesh of the arm into the face. When this has happened, nothing seems to prevent the master and the slave from separating. But unfortunately, some time elapses and the slave falls ill and dies. With sympathetical power as potent as ever, the master's nose immediately grows gangrenous and eventually drops off. It is difficult to see where in such practices the devil showed his face to the critical parson Foster, unless it is realized that these powers could be adverted for more farreaching purposes. Fludd suggests this with a quote from Pimander:

There is nothing more capable than the incorporeall or spirituall nature; nothing more swift (...) nothing more strong or powerful (...)  
Beginning thus with thy self, do thou meditate, and command thy soul,  
what thou pleasest, and it will flye sooner then thou commandest:  
(...) [The spirit reaches everywhere], it passeth quite through,  
even unto the highest body. Moreover, and if thou wilt have her to  
pass over the celestiall Globes, and to search out whatsoever is

above, thou maist do it also, (MP, p.231)

This is the same kind of knowledge the desire for which made the famous magus Faustus strike a pact with the devil. The powers this wisdom would unleash for him are reminiscent of those Fludd would have to use in order to validate his claimed ability to revive dead bodies (MP, pp.219-20).<sup>36</sup>

Viewed alongside one another, the two experiments of the Mosaical Philosophy illustrate once more how in this text philosophical differentiation and theological unity always overshadow and encroach upon each other. The experiment with the weatherglass seems to entail rather harmless theosophical speculations with a clear affinity to the empirical science of contemporaries less preoccupied with the occult. The section on the magnet, on the other hand, points more specifically to the magical roots of Fludd's thought. For Fludd they were not much unlike each other, the one always capable of being subsumed under the terminology of the other.

Accusations against his dangerous presumption and of an alliance with the devil Fludd very probably countered from conviction because human practice and knowledge were not to be taken separately from their spiritual and divine sources. If divine providence allowed him to carry out his work successfully that was sufficient proof that the devil had not tampered with it. Like his fellow magi, Fludd believed in the revelation of truth to some men (the wise Cabalists, for instance, or other spiritually pure persons) and he reckoned himself among them. Parson Foster was not simply mistaking an inspired man for one demonically deluded, but by this very error Foster placed himself beyond argument, in the class of those who 'should duly close their eyes',

and look, as true Philosophers ought, in the re-search of so abstruse an action, with the aspect of their mentall intellect,  
(MP, p.224)

Fludd's total commitment not only brought him opposition, it also provided the defence against that opposition. Nothing less could be expected from his inclusive approach. The answer with which he repeatedly counters Gassendi's attacks in the Clavis Philosophiae is exemplary:

Intelligat velim prius Alchymiam meam, & postea eam, si poterit,  
condemnet. (Clavis Philosophiae, p.57)

I should like him first to understand my alchemy then let him condemn me if he can

Apart from the scornful rhetoric, Fludd's words in this passage have the same recourse to plenitude as the ones above. This time he replies: How can you criticize if you are not acquainted with all of it? The rhetorical practices and articulations typical of Fludd's belief in the principle of plenitude did not stand up to the pressure and alienated Fludd's work from those who had initially thought it their task at least to take issue with it.

### Section three

Fludd's massive Utriusque Cosmi. Maioris scilicet et Minoris, Metaphysica, Physica atque Technica Historia (referred to from now as UCH) illuminates how the encyclopedic text breaks down under the strain of aspirations to plenitude. Articulation or writing cannot be equal to them. UCH extends over five heavy folio tomes which, still, fail to hold all of the projected material. For five years Fludd bundled his knowledge and then he appears to have decided that the inclusion of plenitude under one long title was beyond his powers. Most of his books were published after UCH.

Fludd called UCH a history not in the sense of the word that is common now but referring to its original Greek roots in a general notion of erudition. In the modern dictionary one almost obsolete meaning approximates this: 'A systematic account (without reference to time) of a set of natural phenomena'.<sup>37</sup> Fludd's intention was:

to write aswell the naturall discouerse of the great world, and little world, which we call Man, as also to touch by way of an Encyclophy [sic] or Epitome of all Arts aswell lawful, which I did commend, as those which are esteemed unlawfull, which I did utterly condemne, as superstitious, and of little or no probabilitie at all; (Answer to M. Foster, p.11)

He indicates the proportions of his work in the address to the 'benevolent reader' ('Lectori Benevolo', UCH-I,2;

pp.3-4). Here he reports in an easy going, autobiographical tone how:

operam meam precipuam in artibus liberalioribus ponebam, (ibid.)

I concentrated work on the liberal arts

At least part of the UCH is assembled from a number of initially unattached treatises written on various occasions and for various people:

Cum in exoticis & ultramarinis regionibus (...) per integros fere sex annos Galliam, Hispaniam, Italiam & Germaniam perlustrarem, (ibid.)

While I was in foreign, overseas lands (...) I travelled

[made investigations]

for almost six whole years in France, Spain, Italy and Germany

On these travels he was asked to teach some French noblemen and thus he dedicated his work on arithmetics to his private pupil Charles de Lorraine, his geometry and military arts to the young and gifted François de Lorraine, while the treatises on music and the art of memory were for the marquess of Orizon who:

miro illarum scientiarum cognoscendarum amore accensus erat, (ibid.)

was inflamed with an extraordinary desire to know of these sciences

Moreover Fludd mentions a cosmography written in grateful memory of his father, a treatise on the art of geomancy (for a vice-legate in Avignon), and his work on astrology (for another inhabitant of that city). Subjects not mentioned in this account ('Et sic in caeteris' -'And so with the rest') but equally prominent in UCH are the occult arts of prophecy, chiromancy, and vaticination; genethlialogia (a branch of astrology), the art of the pyramids (a mystical study concerning the proportions of bodies) and exhaustive work on Cabala. Man, his body and particularly his soul, is thoroughly treated too.

The subdivision of UCH suggested by Fludd's introduction, straightforward, with seemingly well-defined sections, is contradicted by the sprawling properties of the actual text. Everything is after all connected with everything else. The section about arithmetics, for instance, spills over into one on the practical 'Military arithmetics' as

well as into various astrological computations, sections on 'Geomantic arithmetics', culminating with the highest art of all in 'de Templo Musicae' (about the Temple of Music).<sup>38</sup> How complicated and unwieldy this huge construction becomes can be guessed from the fact that, for example, geomancy, astrology and music each also re-surface under different aspects, for instance in the treatise on man, the microcosm. Thus it becomes virtually impossible to find out all about one subject in one or two clearly appointed places. The UCH is not meant to be like a modern encyclopedic work of reference. The big tables that appear regularly in the tomes never quite fulfil the role of index or of directory but rather graphically map the complexity of the text. It is as if they present the reader with an overview that discloses the work's web-like nature.

Nothing expresses Fludd's thoroughness of purpose more vividly and beautifully than the famous engraving at the beginning of UCH:

Integrale Naturae speculum. Artisque Imago  
(UCH-I,1; pp.4-5)

A mirror of All Nature. An Image of Art

In it, Nature, depicted as a woman, is joined to God (a hand reaching through a luminous cloud named Yehova) by a chain. She herself:

non [est] DEA sed proxima Dei ministra (ibid., p.8)

is not a Goddess herself but the nearest handmaid of God

The sphere which she governs (for the engraving is in the typical circular form of a cosmographical design) consists of the planets in mid-air, the lower skies and the earth. Only the angels above her, in the outermost sphere of creation, are beyond her control. The picture is completed by the Ape of Nature, Art:

sub se ancillam seu pedissequam habet, qua Dominam suam imitando,  
nerum ab ea productarum similitudines per consensum in se inprimens  
eius vestigia delineationesque mirum in modum prosequitur &  
imitatur: Atque hinc est, quod eam forma & habitu Simiae sub pedibus  
Naturae effigiamus; quam nomine etiam digniore Artem nuncupamus,  
(ibid., pp.7-8)

she [Nature] has under her a servant or helper, who, by imprinting the mistress upon herself by imitation, through the accurate resemblance [representation] of things which she produces, follows her footsteps and imitates her figures miraculously: and this is why I have drawn the form and shape of an Ape under the feet of Nature; which [ sc.the Ape] we call, by a nobler name, Art

The domain of the ape is the smallest circle, the narrow centre of the cosmographical plan. The explanatory words in the engraving (in equally diminutive print) distinguish between those arts that correct nature (ars corrigens), supporting arts (ars adjuvans), those that supplant her (ars supplans), and finally, the liberal arts. So although the accompanying text only speaks of of the ape's arts as imitation the plan bears out that even the most humble art (located in the realm of the minerals) does not simply reproduce nature. It corrects, while in 'the realm of the spirit' art even supplants. The liberal arts just stand by themselves. This notion of art as a supplement to nature and its somewhat complicated relations to the idea of imitation is related to the *topos* of the mirror. But to anticipate and to point out how widely spread this idea was in the 17th century, here is Sir Thomas Browne on the subject:

Now nature is not at variance with art, nor art with nature; they being both servants of [God's] providence: Art is the Perfection of Nature.<sup>39</sup>

The mere fact that UCH does not attain the fulfilment of its grand plan confirms the improbability of its project of plenitude. Peter Heylyn, writing his Cosmographie in a more soberly orthodox state of mind than Fludd, nevertheless also succumbs to the pressures of perfection. Not only does his earlier Microcosmus not suffice, requiring the much bigger elaboration, Cosmographie; but the final page of the earlier book is in fact printed as if it were another opening, another title page. This one, however, is (perhaps ironically) titled 'Of the unknowne parts of the world'. And a more recent and overtly ironical encyclopedic project, that of Flaubert's Bouvard and Pecuchet ends in another form of indetermination.<sup>40</sup> In the case of UCH the text does not discharge itself of its promise as plotted by the tables and diagrams. One entire tractate

(approximately one third of the description of the microcosm) and one section eventually did not appear.

A work that aspires to cover virtually everything between heaven and earth is ultimately destined to the same end as J.L.Borges' 'Library', of which the narrator says:

The certitude that everything has been written negates us or turns us into phantoms<sup>41</sup>

For the all-inclusive library absorbs its reader together with everything else outside it. Borges' story traces this engulfment and disappearance all along. Men in the library 'strangled each other', 'others went mad'; broken stairways almost kill, there are suicides, epidemics, banditry, and the narrator himself is 'preparing to die'. Finally the narrator imagines an 'eternal traveller' who crosses the library 'in any direction, after centuries', and who would see 'that the same volumes were repeated in the same disorder': a last view in which the immortality of the eternal beholder and the infinity of the library cancel out one another in their immaterialness and turn transparent. The truly inclusive text can only achieve its end when, like a theosophical, Fluddean figure, it works itself into a perfect, closed circle. Then, ideally, the text incorporates even itself, exhausting thereby the entire realm of objects. The impossibility of this final inclusion -for, as in Borges' story, it would result in the disappearance of both the text and its reader- is communicated by two independent remarks in UCH, one from Fludd, and one from his printer. Both are conventional remarks: Fludd's formulation has an almost exact double, for instance, in Agrippa's Three Books of Occult Philosophy. The first is the printer's apology to the readers:

Typographus Lectori

En tibi Lector Amice medullam voluminis secundi in tabulam  
compendiosam redacti, cuius substantiam integrum, quia ab auctore  
nondum penitus completa est, huic operi adjungere non potui.  
(UCH-I,3; p.788)

The Printer to the Reader

Here, friendly reader, reduced to a brief synopsis, is the essence

of the second volume, whose complete contents since they have not yet been finished by the author, I could not incorporate into this work

The printer begs the readers' sympathy and forbearance for this unsatisfactory state of affairs:

Tu igitur candide lector parcus esto in judicando,  
autorisque labores in primo hoc volumine exan̄latos  
boni aequique consule, ne alioquin importunitate tua  
ille in secundo suo labore adhuc imperfecto & minus  
absoluto deterreatur atque ita in medio sine publicatione  
relinquat. (ibid.)

Therefore, dear reader, be sparing in your judgement,  
and think kindly and justly of the labour expended by the  
writer in this first volume, lest otherwise he may be  
deterred by your harsh criticism from his second work, as  
yet imperfect and incomplete, and may abandon it, half-  
way through, unpublished.

This plea appears at the end of volume one which was published in 1618. By this time Fludd had only submitted part of the material for the second volume which eventually appeared one year later. Whether the completion of the second volume depended as much on the readers' benevolent response as the printer's words imply is difficult to judge. It is known that Kepler acquired the first volume in Frankfurt and published his negative response to it in the Harmonice Mundi in 1619. Obviously, the printer is making a conventional gesture towards an audience that might very well be somewhat taken aback by the scope and substance of Fludd's opus. In the event the second volume did remain incomplete and the printer's appeal alerts the reader to the fact that this was its fate before the last page was printed. But besides this problem of the unfinished, Fludd himself presents his readers with a question that addresses over-inclusion. The following words come from a passage entitled Epiloquus Apologeticum:

Non ideo, Lector benevole, Magi impii nomen me mereri  
credas, quod de nominibus spirituum & nonnullis eorum  
characteribus verba feci: Scire enim te velim, me ore

aliorum duntaxat esse locutum, & ea literis mandasse,  
quae sequi, aut quibus fidem certam adhibere ipse  
negabo; Attamen hoc loco ea pertractare volui, partim  
methodi gratia, & partim ea ratione, qua Logici docere  
consueverunt fallacias: videlicet, non ut fallant  
homines, sed ut, ne fallantur, caveant & premoneantur:  
Sic enim hoc loco etiam inanem vel potius incertam  
veterum sapientiam depinximus, ut tu, certiori modo  
instructus viam veram, simplicem, & piam, meliori spe,  
atque fiducia sequareis, genuinum cujusque Genium  
invenias, ac verum Astrologiae abstrusae arcanum  
cognoscas. Fecimus igitur in praemissa hujus libri  
parte, quod pictores solent, quando colores deteriores  
in margine alicujus insignis effigiei disponunt, ut  
in interiori imaginis delineatae parte sit ornatio.  
Attende igitur, Bone Lector; Et si diligenter res, prout  
sunt, consideraveris, fortasse nostros, hosce exanflatos  
labores non respues, nec tuam etiam operam, aut oleum  
perdes. (Tom.II, 1,b -p.98)

Do not think, kind reader, that I deserve the name of  
of impious magician because I have written about the  
names of spirits and of some of their characters: For  
I should like you to know that I have only spoken  
through the mouth of others, and that I have written  
down things which I myself refuse to follow or firmly believe:  
Yet I have desired to discuss these things fully here, partly for  
the sake of method and partly for the reason for which the  
Logicians are accustomed to teach things which are untrue: namely,  
not so that people may err, but in order that they may not err,  
so that they may be wary and forewarned. For we have  
depicted here the vain, or rather, uncertain wisdom of  
the ancients, in such a way that you, instructed more correctly,  
may follow the right, simple and pious way with better  
hope and trust; so that you may find out the essential nature  
[genuine genius] of each; and so that you may know the  
true secret of the hidden Astrology.

Hence we have in the preceding part of this book done what painters do when they put the inferior colours in the margin of some splendid picture, so that the beauty of the inner part of the painted image will be the more admirable. So be attentive, good reader, and if you will have considered carefully these matters for what they are, you will perhaps not reject these our efforts, nor waste your own toil and trouble

This apology is marked by its thoroughness: to avoid reproaches Fludd uses the technique of putting one argument in various perspectives. Some of the things he has written may count against him and this he seeks to prevent by disclaiming: 'I have only spoken through the mouths of others'. As they stand, his words would not qualify as excuse, so the reason for speaking like this is put into a moral, epistemological as well as in an aesthetic context. Error must be included so that people may make the right choice: inclusiveness becomes the condition for free will, moral responsibility. Similarly, Pico's man is created last, overseeing everything from his exalted place, and by virtue of this he is free to move up or down the scale of creation. A quote from Milton's famous argument for the freedom of expression in Areopagitica, too, is apposite here:

It was from out the rinde of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evill as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the World. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evill, that is to say of knowing good by evill.<sup>42</sup>

As in the printer's words, the text's fulness is at stake. This time, however, the text is threatened with over-inclusiveness rather than with remaining incomplete. The 'vain or rather uncertain wisdom of the ancients' places Fludd in a dilemma. It is alien: 'I have only spoken through the mouths of others'. Yet 'method' or the rules of fulness that determine the nature of the historia (or encyclopedia) demand that even this, the alien, the inferior colours, the errors and fallacies, be incorporated. And though this dilemma is stated in terms contrary to those of the printer whose problem concerned non-fulfilment, these

apologies' shared inability is easily perceived: a powerlessness of the text to face and adequately articulate (its) fulness.<sup>43</sup>

This powerlessness is the incapacity at the root of the encyclopedic enterprise to produce a text that is equal to itself. Thus, the dangerous transparency of a Borgesian perfect library is avoided. The ideal coincidence and indeed collapse of inside and outside, text and truth, envisaged by the encyclopedia or book of plenitude is beyond realization. The successful arrival at this last stage is categorically outside the scope of UCH. From the moment it sets out to plot its route to that transparency it, paradoxically but inevitably commits itself to gaining progressively in bookish weight and thus it resigns itself finally to its inability to reach a self-consuming end.

From a text that is essentially unequal to itself (intimated by the printer's words) UCH becomes one that cannot make itself disappear. These states of affairs sum up the predicament of the encyclopedia. Moving on the pulse, the systole and diastole of the created universe, and moving like it as it mimics the universal fulness, its fate is to contract and dilate with the alternation and difference that gives birth to the world.

Chapter three Paradise Lost and Plenitude

Section one

The ideals of closure and selfsameness on which the previous two chapters focused, constitute the background to the question of full expression the possibility of which, as this chapter shows, is probed in Paradise Lost, both through its epic structure and by its many voiced presentation of the events of creation. A further aspect of the question of plenitude is addressed by the poem in its treatment of the theme of transgression, the nature of limitation and the senses of lack and excess that lead to the obliteration of that limit. Sin, in the poem, can be seen as the consequence of ill-directed desire, a wish for wholeness and fulfilment which recognizes neither limitation nor difference.

As is well known, Paradise Lost (with its recurrent reference to creation and its inclusion of notions of plenitude) has obvious affinities with the hexameral genre.<sup>1</sup> 'Man's first disobedience', 'the fruit/Of that forbidden tree', 'loss of Eden' are all written about in the first three chapters of Genesis, the source for the hexameral literature. In fact, Corcoran writes, hexameral commentaries usually added the fall to the six days of their subject.<sup>2</sup> Nor are the events of which Paradise Lost treats of course restricted to the six days' work: they happen, as it were, as the first things after the first things, just as hexameral literature itself comes after Genesis. In Paradise Lost the creation is narrated but the war in heaven preceding it and the final tragedy of the fall even become dramatically more prominent than it. When Milton in the first invocation announces his aim in 'this great argument', that

I may assert eternal providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.  
(I, 25-26)

he signals that his poem exceeds a mere re-telling of creation, both in subject matter and as regards its literary intentions and scope. To view Paradise Lost as a re-telling, to assign to it a wholly 'new but plenary inspiration' in the way Daiches does,<sup>3</sup> proves problematic for reasons dealt with in this and later chapters.

The heavy volumes of hexameral commentary (on which Milton relied both in Paradise Lost and in the Christian Doctrine) exist because of the gaps in the Biblical account of creation. Williams explains how they originated from a need, arising early in Christian history, to defend rationally the apparent inconsistencies that occur abundantly in the Scripture.<sup>4</sup> By the time Paradise Lost was written Genesis had accumulated a vast amount of expository material which was still being elaborated by both Catholics and Protestants.

Milton understandably disliked these hexameral commentaries. They obscured the sight of those who wanted a clear view of the original, as he indicated at the beginning of the Christian Doctrine:

The process of restoring religion to something of its pure original state, after it had been defiled with impurities for more than thirteen hundred years, dates from the beginning of the last century<sup>5</sup>

His own religious work would be firmly based on a reading of the Bible:

I should derive this from the word of God and from that alone, should be scrupulously faithful to the text,<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless Milton amply used this extraneous material (in both Paradise Lost and the Christian Doctrine), for the hexameral commentaries were a conveniently established body of religious statement and counterstatement through which the various attitudes of the Church could be followed in their historical development. Svendsen shows how Milton, similarly, availed himself of the Renaissance encyclopedia, (another kind of text that evolved from the concept of the plenum) in order to find scientific material for Paradise Lost.<sup>7</sup> Milton's aim of justification and assertion is not alien in spirit to the commentators' objective. Both aim at the restoration of a fulness enfolded in the status quo. The commentators amplified the Genesis material,<sup>8</sup> Milton justified and asserted and in doing so amplified.<sup>9</sup> For here to justify means not so much to free from blame (a responsibility which, if Milton had taken it upon himself, would have brought him dangerously near presumption) but rather the supplying of good grounds, the filling up of something left open. In undertaking this work of 'fulfilment', the poet adopts a mediatorial

role: he not only justifies but also asserts. Milton's role as assertor and the nature of that assertion are of crucial importance in the poem: he classes himself with those who amplified because of the rhetorical nature of this role.

Two Renaissance literary genres in particular are related to the hexameral commentaries. These are the hexameral poem as exemplified by DuBartas' La Sepmaine and tragedies of the fall such as those by Vondel, Grotius and Andreini.

DuBartas' 'poetical Leviathan'<sup>10</sup> was an enormously popular text. La Sepmaine was read by Sdney, Spenser as well as by Milton, and translated into English in 1605, by Joshua Sylvester. Even a brief glance at DuBartas' opus warns of the need for discipline and restraint on the part of the writer who took on the hexameron. DuBartas lacked these qualities so that days become weeks and weeks need works to achieve wholeness or fulfilment; a fulfilment poignantly betrayed by the writer's physical limitations when he deceased before the completion of the 'Works'. This however did not deter the English translator from adding his part in turn, for instance, by adjusting DuBartas' flora to the English landscape:

Heere (deere S.Bartas), give thy Servant leave  
in thy rich Garland one rare Flower to weave<sup>11</sup>

The temptation to weave numerous rare flowers into the original garland proved too great. Indeed, it is the openendedness of the French source and its encyclopedic nature (both transferred to its translation) that made it so eminently expandable.

Sylvester/DuBartas' text is highly heterogeneous, not only in its adumbration of a wealth of diverse subjects (Genesis as well as later Biblical history; science, art, geography, theology), but also in the variety of styles employed to deal with these subjects (among these is some dramatic writing describing the events of the fall where God speaks directly - on the whole, however, the poem defeats any effort at classification.) This is doubtlessly what Ted Douglas Bush to call the Divine Weeks 'a kind of Albert Memorial of encyclopedic fundamentalism'. While the tragedies of the fall were well defined by their observance of the rules of tragedy (the most significant of which, in this context,

surely was that it must end), the Divine Weeks and Works was modelled on history itself and disappeared from its writer's sight even as time had to pass by him on its way to its presumed final consummation.

Milton, by choosing to abandon his projected tragedy in favour of epic, was like DuBartas in a position to handle 'more fulness'. But unlike the Frenchman, Milton wrote a text that did not simply respond to the demands of plenitude with a style that often consisted of little more than the literary equivalent of cataloguing. Paradise Lost raises the problems of inclusiveness to a theme. In the Divine Weeks and Works however, the encyclopedic principle only functions as the pretext for generating endless additions and embellishments.

In tragedies of the fall the first chapters of Genesis are dramatized. Examples of this genre are Andreini's L'Adamo (1613), Grotius' Adamus Exul (1601) or Vondel's Adam in Ballingschap (1664; Adam in Exile) which all dramatize the story of man's first sin and punishment. Indeed, Milton's nephew Edward Phillips, in the 'Life' of his uncle, tells how Paradise Lost too was 'first designed a Tragedy'.<sup>12</sup> The choice of such material seems natural at a time when the first story was so popular as to figure in books on geography and history, as well as on science. Grotius, in his dedication to Prince Henry of Bourbon, explains that he wrote his tragedy

When I had leisure from the study of Law, history and  
the Civil arts.<sup>13</sup>

He took up the first story<sup>14</sup>, the story of man's fall:

from his whole and happy state into this misery<sup>15</sup>

and seems to have found it rewarding to write about a subject which by now traditionally included (and was included by) philosophy, metaphysics and physics, as well as ethics, geography and astrology:<sup>16</sup>

In this manner I pursued simultaneously piousness and  
the study of human and divine wisdom, as well as  
Poetry<sup>17</sup>

Obviously Genesis offers the homo universalis ample scope to indulge and display his erudition. Adamus Exul testifies to its writer's wide

learning and as such it is markedly distinguished from Vondel's drama, that more modestly exploits only the lyric and tragic aspects of its source material. Francis Burham, who translated Adamus Exul into English in 1829, noticed similarities between Paradise Lost and Grotius' tragedy (as well as, more generally, between the characters of the two authors)<sup>18</sup>:

It is clear, that like Grotius, Milton also was  
eminently skilled in theological science, in all the  
cabalistic and mythological initiations, and philosophi-  
cal learning of antiquity.<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to note that Grotius incorporated Christian Cabalist material in his play of which he made Satan the almost exclusive mouthpiece. Christian Cabalism is portrayed as a nihilistic, power-mad doctrine with the help of which Satan persuades Eve. Satan is made to imply that the mystical union Christian Cabalism seeks is equal to death. In the last chapter, on the contrary, a doctrine like Fludd's was shown to constitute a far more affirmative mysticism. It is evident too that Milton did not similarly use Christian Cabalist material in his portrayal of Satan. It is in their grand, encyclopedic approach of the hexameron that Grotius' and Milton's works most resemble each other.

Both Grotius' and Vondel's tragedies had to negotiate the dramaturgic problems of their chosen form and it is no coincidence that they go under the same name. Sometimes their tragic form has amusing results for the modern reader or audience accustomed to stage realism. Since his story of the fall was to be acted in public, Vondel, for instance, contrived to present his prelapsarian couple in a way not offensive to his audience's good taste and sense of decency. The couple make their entrance in white robes of innocence while Lucifer who spies on them furnishes the commentary:

There they walk, dressed in the white silk of inherited  
righteousness which is draped around their loins. It is so finely  
spun that the beauty of the body can shine and glow through the  
silk<sup>20</sup>

One wonders to what extent that transparency was achieved by other than verbal means. But staging the fall involved other problems. The traces of one of these are even in Milton's epic: if the nudity of Adam and Eve was a source of embarrassment to the dramatist, how then was he to present the protagonist of Genesis 1, God himself? Vondel, who in the case of the first couple had found it necessary to insert a reflection on the allegorical quality of their dress, here edited God out of the action altogether. He does not appear on the list of 'Personages'. Compared to Grotius' play, Vondel's is only marginally an amplification in the assertive, mediatorial aspect of the term discussed at the beginning of this chapter. But Grotius was clearly aware of the nature of this particular kind of text:

Hence no fair judge will consider it unfavourably that,  
since I have used the oldest story, some things are said  
by means of comparisons while others through pro-  
lepsis.<sup>21</sup>

Having professed the figurative quality of his text he proceeded to include 'Yehova' with his dramatis personae.

In Paradise Lost, of course, God speaks too, but the epic poem gives the author more than sufficient opportunity to ponder publicly over such representational problems as Grotius treated in his dedication. In Milton's poem, the dramatists' technical problem is transformed into an issue that is copiously addressed throughout. This is the issue epitomized in the notion of anthropomorphic speech. Although somewhat redundant from a purely linguistic point of view -speech being the uniquely human form of expression it is-, the question of anthropomorphism is relevant to theological language where the divine and its communications must be represented in some way or another. Milton addressed the problem in the Christian Doctrine:

Admittedly, God is always described or outlined not as he really is,  
but in such a way as will make him conceivable to us<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, both Grotius and Milton, in their selfconscious gestures toward the issue of anthropomorphism show that for them the notion of amplification entails more than either reproduction, embellishment or

addition: indeed, in this context, 'amplification' may be (somewhat liberally) paraphrased as the making ample or suitable (for human sense). The questions about the form and validity of representation that such anthropomorphic amplification implies are looked at in the following chapters.

It is, on the whole, Milton's ability to exceed the tragedies that sets him apart. Not only is his amplification a richer elaboration of Genesis, it is also far more alive to the problems of representation that arise in connection with the notion of amplification. Moreover, Milton's decision to move away from tragedy to an epic structure that still retained some tragic elements, gave him recourse to a different concept of fictional space and time that was to contribute significantly to the success of his work.

### Section two

There are extant in the Trinity College MS four early drafts in which Milton started to outline a tragedy about the fall called 'Paradise Lost' in the third draft but also (more like Grotius and Vondel) 'Adam Unparadised' in the fourth. At some time between the sketching of these,<sup>23</sup> and the publication of Paradise Lost the momentous decision was made to compose an epic poem. Paradise Lost stands apart from the tragedies even in its opening lines. The tragic dramatis personae have left the stage and the audience, too, disperses. A text emerges in which the theatrical stage has split up into a number of less concrete and more indirectly evoked places; and unlike tragedy, in the epic characters or events do not speak for themselves. They are quoted and recounted by the poet/narrator who hence is implicated in them. The narrator cannot forbear to make his own voice known. Even if the poet/narrator of Paradise Lost has not been there, in illo tempore, he is now, in his poem, and his presence, made prominent by repeated gestures of self-awareness is one of the most fascinating aspects of that poem. With similar self-awareness, neither Raphael nor Michael omit to remind their audience (Adam and Eve) of the distorting consequences of their missions as mediating and representative angels.

The different generic features of epic intensify that sense of authorial self-awareness and interference. The epic's way of beginning in medias res is its principal hallmark. To begin in medias res is to assume a responsibility in time. Leaving the 'natural' progress of the first story for what it is, Milton re-shapes or amplifies it through the medium of his un-innocent language. He knows the outcome of the events of his narrative before he begins to write them down, and even the vision of future history which is conferred upon the first fallen man is anachronous for him. Temporal duration, in which the poet participates, is in Paradise Lost confronted with a special commitment: the lack of (authorial) innocence is made explicit in the poem's treatment of the beginning of time (not at the beginning of the poem, and embedded in layers of language as an account of an account).

Paradise Lost's structure reflects this authorial commitment. Many critics refer to the ancient division of which Frank Kermode has written in his Sense of an Ending, between Kairos and Chronos, two kinds of time or temporal experience.<sup>24</sup> The first of these, Kairos, is associated with the transcendent world of the gods and of myth and is sometimes called fulfilled time. It is the timeless and changeless world of being, the state of rest within divine unity that all desire for plenitude, completion and wholeness craves and invokes. T.S. Eliot, for instance, writes of Kairos in 'Burnt Norton':

(...) abstention from movement; while the world moves  
In appetency, on its metalled ways  
Of time past and time future.<sup>25</sup>

Chronos, by contrast, governs the world of man and of mutability. It is unfulfilled par excellence, 'In appetency', time of movement and of restless desire. Another, but spatially oriented metaphor for this difference is the well known distinction between Kairos as cyclic and Chronos as linear time. Some critics, like Shawcross, Crump and Berry adopt the spatial metaphor and observe the different ways in which the poem's twelve books interrelate and combine.<sup>26</sup> Symmetries, echoes and analogies are located and interpreted, sometimes elaborate word- and linecounts are carried out to show symbolic (a-temporal) structures articulated on the temporal narrative. Others link the concepts of time

to arrive at two corresponding readings that the poem seems to require. One of these is seen to redeem the other even as 'Time present and time past' are redeemed by eternity. Such an approach is favoured by Stanley Fish who reads Paradise Lost as 'a poem concerned with the self-education of its readers'. For him the poem eventually demands a reading which ideally ends in the triumph of non-causal, transcendental Episteme over Dianoia, the causal and time-bound form of knowledge.<sup>27</sup> Martz, too, reads the poem as 'the progress of an interior journey toward the centre of the soul', a movement in time toward stepping out of time.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Paradise Lost is read as if it formed the battleground for these opposed times or for the voices and forces that stand for them. Conceived as the plan of a struggle, the poem is then taken to offer a resolution, generally in the sense of a final victory of Kairos over time-ridden Chronos. This victory is seen as the triumph of a-temporal order over the disorder of temporality, of unity over plurality, or as the attainment of revelation through education.

'Education' could indeed function as a key concept for the understanding of Paradise Lost but does not really allow such an easy escape from the complicated interactions between opposing times and terms. In fact, the notion precludes this kind of resolution. For there exists a historical link between the epic form and the encyclopedia, the course of education in plenitude. According to Frye, who roots this tradition in Lucretius and Dante, 'The epic, as Renaissance critics understood it, (...) is a special kind of narrative. It (...) has an encyclopedic quality in it, distilling the essence of all the religious, philosophical, political, even scientific learning of its time.'<sup>29</sup> Very clearly, Milton exploits this connection in Paradise Lost. But just as Fludd's encyclopedia could not coincide with the ideal, cyclical and closed form of the course to Kairos, this poem constitutes no exception and does not afford an unambiguous, self-contained, inclusive conclusion. And whilst a beginning in medias res might suggest the symmetry of the circle characteristic of Kairos, the text that begins in medias res has also lost its source or place of origin to a voice speaking from a place in the middle. Chronos re-enters: whatever timeless or fulfilled structure the poem may represent, the way mediating voices are implicated in it is intrusive enough to subvert the hegemony of such a structure.

Neither the epic poem in general nor Paradise Lost in particular can offer the comfortable closure of the circular figure. The poet/narrator who starts in the middle of things always moves between the assumed historicity (linearity) of his tale and the implied overview (cyclicity) of his knowledge as narrator. Or, conversely: between the mythic time of recounted events and the fallen, broken status of his medium. It is not surprising that the famous trope of the poet as creator, which broaches the problematics of authorial control and involvement, is emphatically embraced in Dante's epic work, at the beginning of the Renaissance when such questions of authorship became very important. But while it has often been acknowledged how this (Renaissance) ideal of the poet-creator deifies man, it has less frequently been observed how it humanizes God, the 'sovereign architect'. As such the trope alerts the reader to the extent and complexity of mutual involvement of Kairos and Chronos, the transcendental and the temporal in these texts.

### Section three

Two themes that occur in Paradise Lost illustrate the complications between truth and its full expression or assertion, between transcendent fulness and worldly limitation. The first of these themes can be called that of the fragmented account of creation and is found in a number of passages throughout the poem. These passages are all dedicated to the conveying of information about that original event, yet they are doing so from various viewpoints and in different terms. This culminates and is epitomized in Raphael's account of creation in book VII. Second, there is the theme of difference and similarity, whose relations are at the base of, for instance, the poem's concept of transgression. These two themes are not considered strictly separately because, as becomes clear, they deeply involve each other.

Virtually no main character in Paradise Lost omits to supply some information on the subject of creation. Contributions come from Beelzebub, better angels, God himself, as well as from Adam and Eve. Some deliver grand declarations (such are Raphael's speeches in books V and VII), others' speeches, woven into (for instance) God's 'foreseeing' words or Uriel's innocent praise in the same book, are of lesser stature.

When Adam (in book VIII) tries to convey how he first woke up into existence he admits how difficult this is:

For man to tell how human life began  
Is hard; for who himself beginning knew?  
(VIII, 250-51)

With Adam's realization of the limits of his knowledge the treatment of creation in the entire poem is well described. The various voices through which it is spoken by no means repeat a plain argument or story.

'Nothing', says D.Bouchard (even more decisively), in Paradise Lost, 'is seen at first hand':<sup>30</sup> at least in relation to the question of creation, the poem is certainly more of an aggregate of viewpoints than anything else. Though the point had not yet been made at the time Milton wrote, the fact that Genesis could (and indeed had to) be read from more than one aspect, was necessitated by the (at least) two different accounts by which it is constituted. These are, interestingly enough (considering the Kairos-Chronos division), known as the mythical and historical versions of, respectively, the Elohist and the Jahwist.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Beelzebub presents his version when he proposes his devilish plan ('first devised/By Satan'- II, 379-80) which is based on the knowledge that

There is a place  
(...) another world, the happy seat  
Of some new race called Man, about this time  
To be created like us, though less  
In power and excellence, but favoured more  
Of him who rules above; so was his will  
Pronounced among the gods,  
(ibid., 345-52)

As they come last in a line of deceptive speeches addressed to the mass of credulous, fallen angels, the reader is expected to be wary of these words. In fact, this first information about the creation in Paradise Lost is highly dubious. Not only is it indefinite (where is the place? when is 'about this time'?) and does it actually provide its vague answers to questions themselves traditionally considered dangerous. But

also it tells an untruth, spectacular because, nonetheless, it does not quite qualify as lie. Man, as Beelzebub has it, 'to be created like to us' (the (fallen) angels) is only 'like to us' insofar as both man and angel are created in God's image. God speaks:

Let us make now man in our image, man  
In our similitude,  
(VII, 519-20)

And it is from his example and command that both angels and, later, man, come into being. Hence Beelzebub's reference to only one half of the truth (man's resemblance to angels) instructively reflects the reasoning which precipitated the party into hell in the first place. They refuse to accept the order and restrictions which assign them a definite place in the creaturely hierarchy. With them 'all restraint broke loose' (III, 87).

If this episode suggests that readers may recognize truth by recognizing as such what it is not (the idea behind the Christian mystical via negativa)<sup>32</sup>, the case of Satan's speech to Uriel illustrates the absence of such recognition in a less well prepared and warned 'reader'. Truth is now taken for what it seems. Even when apparently correct words are spoken, they may be spoken without faith, hypocritically. This is a species of untruth so difficult to perceive that initially only the poet from his privileged position can point it out:

So spake the false dissembler unperceived;  
For neither man nor angel can discern  
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks  
Invisibly, except to God alone,  
(III, 681-84)

Only when Satan has already reached his destination does Uriel see through his ploy. Meanwhile, Satan wins Uriel's confidence, as Empson said, by getting 'a cosy piety into his speech chiefly by packing it with all's'.<sup>33</sup> In his words about the creation he calls man God's 'chief delight and favour' and rehearses flatteringly:

[Man] On whom the great creator has bestowed  
Worlds, and on whom hath all these graces poured;

That both in him and all things, as is meet,  
The universal maker we may praise;  
(ibid., 673-76)

Ironically, it is of course his own proud incapacity to do just that, to praise, that accounts for Satan's bad faith. Far from praising, he is on his way to destroy. The two evil angels, Beelzebub and Satan, speak differently about creation: the one in misplaced terms of similarity, the other in those of plenitude that come to cover as well as signal the very emptiness of their intention. Neither of the angels is foolish enough simply to lie, but in both cases at least the reader has the opportunity to see through their tricks. Satan and Beelzebub employ words without the smallest gesture of acknowledgement of the gap between them and the truth they are to describe. To the contrary, Satan and Beelzebub use 'rhetoric', the technique designed to persuade by means of blurring that gap. Rather than having contributed information on the six days' work, these two angels have aroused the readers' suspicions of words.

But the 'all' Satan handles so shrewdly returns improved in the words of good Raphael himself when he responds to Adam's curiosity about the angels. Initially his 'all' motif is reminiscent of the one in Satan's speech:

O Adam, one almighty is, from whom  
All things proceed, and up to him return,  
If not depraved from good, created all  
Such to perfection, one first matter all,  
(V, 469-72)

But this time, in contrast with Satan's words, the all is not brandished as mere pass-word or slogan. In fact, Raphael includes what Satan, significantly, omitted. The all is

Indued with various forms, Various degrees  
Of substance, and in things that live, of life;  
But more refined, more spirituous, and pure,  
As nearer to him placed or nearer tending  
Each in their several active spheres assigned,  
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds

Proportioned to each kind.

(ibid., 473-79; emphasis added)

The reiterative stress on degree and proportion; a mention, a little furtheron, of 'gradual scale' (483), culminate in a statement that corrects any misleading impression of sameness without difference left by Satan or Beelzebub:

Differing but in degree, of kind the same

(V, 490)

This insertion, by Raphael, of a notion of difference and its related concepts (various, several, bounds, proportioned) sets right the two interrelated mistakes made by Beelzebub and Satan. It adds the perspective of dissimilarity to Beelzebub's presumptuous similarity: the fallen angels have no right to claim similarity, either on their own behalf or on that of man (as Satan will do furtheron in order <sup>to</sup> <sub>λ</sub> seduce successfully). In Raphael's words something of creation is conveyed by an angel who, through his journeying between the upper regions of the air and the earth, is in a position to disclose some information about the complex relations between those areas. The view he presents of plenitude and gradation, continuity and spirituality, is a Platonic one to which Adam, a little later, responds with an image equally familiar from the Christian Cabalist literature as Raphael's:

the scale of nature set

From centre to circumference, whereon  
In contemplation of created things,  
By steps we may ascend to God.

(V, 509-12)

For Adam, from his point of view, the relevance of the creation lies particularly with the place and purpose assigned to him as a human being. He himself stresses that he is representing the human viewpoint in book VIII, when he reciprocates Raphael's instruction as follows:

now hear me relate

My story, which perhaps thou hast not heard;

(VIII, 204-5; emphasis added)

And indeed there do exist gaps, even in Raphael's knowledge which Adam can fill:

say therefore on;  
For I that day was absent, as befell,  
(ibid., 228-29)

Even the angel has a restricted view as he cannot, like God, be everywhere at once.

The very theme, it could be said, of Adam's ensuing relation is his respectful recognition, right from the start, of the difference between himself and his maker:

Thou in thyself art perfect, and in thee  
Is no deficience found; not so is man,  
(ibid., 415-16; emphasis added)

If God is unique or singular,  
through all numbers absolute, though one;  
(ibid., 421)

man's singularity is of another kind. It is singleness, 'unity defective':

But man by number is to manifest  
His single imperfection, and beget  
Like of his like, his image multiplied,  
In unity defective,  
(ibid., 422-25; emphasis added)

In fact, the need for completion, for a complement, or for company, which Adam thus so early on expresses is a difficult one. The fulness to which he seems to be restored with the birth of Eve proves to be neither so stable nor so satisfactory as not to disintegrate later with the loss of Paradise:

This woman whom thou madest to be my help,  
And gavest me as thy perfect gift, so good,  
So fit, so acceptable, so divine,  
That from her hand I could suspect no ill,

And what she did, whatever in itself,  
Her doing seemed to justify the deed;  
She gave me of the tree, and I did eat.  
(X, 137-41)

When the Son descends from heaven to pronounce the sinners' judgement he makes a point of holding up before Adam the latter's mistaken ideas about his relations with Eve. Adam has erred in believing Eve to be so unambiguously his perfection:

Was she thy God, that <sup>thou</sup><sub>x</sub> didst obey

the Son accuses and adds even more powerfully:

or was she made thy guide,  
Superior, or but equal,  
(X, 145-47; emphasis added)

Later on in this dissertation the dangers associated with this notion of equality in Paradise Lost are discussed. In the meantime one is reminded of an early warning in book VIII, when Adam reports on his and Eve's first hours. The divine presence promises newly created, lonely, 'incomplete' Adam:

Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,  
(VIII, 450)

And not so much later, overjoyed, Adam echoes:

I now see  
Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, myself  
Before me;  
(ibid., 494-96)

The difference between Adam's words, 'myself/Before me', and the divine ones, 'thy other self', is so slight that it easily goes unperceived in the festive mood, full of expectations of the good to follow. Yet difference there is: a small omission on Adam's behalf which only acquires meaning with the knowledge of later events. The divine words included and balanced against 'self' (denoting similarity and equality)

the word 'other'. When Adam speaks next, that word 'other' has been dropped.

Similarly, when Eve supplies her own words on her creation, they already forbode impending tragedy. In her, the desire for completion or company threatens to be 'vain' (IV, 466); mirroring herself in the 'Smooth lake' (ibid., 459) she shows an ominous tendency to confuse divine self-sufficiency and her own human limitations, here represented as her reflected outline. And while first a 'voice' in the garden saves her from the lot of Narcissus:

What theœthou seest, fair creature, is thyself,  
With thee it came and goes;  
(ibid., 467-69)

-later, Satan's words nevertheless tempt and persuade her:

Goddess humane, reach then, and freely taste.  
(IX, 732)

Again, it will shortly be seen how crucially the theme of equality features in this error.

Through Adam and Eve's recounted experiences of creation something more, then, is communicated about the place and importance of difference, want and limitation in that creation; a message they, as human beings, can transmit best.

The next testimony about creation comes from Uriel, guardian of the sun, who has actually witnessed it:

I saw when at [God's] word the formless mass,  
This world's material mould, came to a heap;  
(III, 708-9)

-though even he modestly declines to know it all:

But what created mind can comprehend  
(ibid., 705)

First, according to Uriel, 'wild uproar/Stood ruled' (ibid., 710-11). Then:

at his second bidding darkness fled,  
Light shone, and order from disorder sprung;  
(*ibid.*, 712-13)

Now the four elements, earth, water, air and fire, become distinct and:

this ethereal quintessence of heaven  
Flew upward, spirited with various forms,  
(*ibid.*, 716-17)

These are familiar terms and ideas to Christian Cabalism. Limits are drawn or enounced; light shines into darkness; 'ethereal quintessence' is separated from other materials. All of these actions figure in the ex-Deo theory to which Milton as well as the Christian Cabalists adhered. According to it creation is not from nothing (*ex Nihilo*) but rather comprises an internal change in which forces realign themselves and become articulate. This process of creation emphasizes such concepts as delimitation, a change from chaos to order, separate location, place, etc., thus maintaining the theme of difference or differentiation.

The only reference to creation made by God himself puts Genesis in a legalistic context, namely in that of the question of free will. If there is any one place in Paradise Lost where God's ways to men are truly being justified it is here, in book III (90ff):

if I foreknew,  
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault;  
(III, 117-18)

says God to his Son after having defined the meaning of 'free choice'. This legal mechanism of free will presupposes the already known conceptions concerning the all. Plenitude, as it becomes manifest in creation, paradoxically does not preclude gaps and lacks. Indeed, as the previous passages with their thematics of 'difference' or differentiation have shown, these discontinuities and inequalities themselves are behind that manifestation of fulness. In this way creation, its typical order from chaos or indistinctness, comes about.

This, from a moral-epistemological (rather than a cosmological) point of view, is comparable to the dynamics of foreknowledge. The divine, all

embracing wisdom which transcends the mundane categories of space and time, does neither bar nor contradict the possibility of a more limited form of knowledge, 'down there' in created nature. And so it is with the moral consequence of this divine foreknowledge. Man's free will is a valid (not a sham) attribute, because it exists in a world essentially different from the time- and space -surpassing one in which only foreknowledge is possible. Indeed, it is only insofar as the human and divine spheres coexist without negating one another and without interfering, that such notions as free will have significance. To illustrate these relations that prevail between the timeless and the time-bound, here is a famous passage from Augustine's Confessions:

although you [God] are before time, it is not in time  
that you precede it. If this were so you would not be  
before all time. It is in eternity which is supreme over  
time because it is a never ending present, that you are  
at once before all past time and after all future time.  
(...) your years are completely present to you all at  
once.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, back in the moral context, freedom is not dispensed without limitation. It is not anarchic and must take place in a world where differentiation exists. There is at least

the sole command,  
Sole pledge of [man's] obedience:  
(III, 94-95)

Choice (the argument here is) would be meaningless in an undifferentiated world of fulness, just as it is unfeasible to point out a red spot on an homogeneously red surface. As such, choice is the privilege par excellence of the creature at the summit of creation, who Pico described in his Dignity of Man. Indeed, this defines his special dignity, his character.

But among all these different perspectives on creation there remains one not touched upon yet, which incorporates the story of Genesis 1 and 2 most fully. This is the long passage covering the best part of book VII, in which Raphael provides Adam with the knowledge which man, coming late, cannot obtain by himself. The abundance and thoroughness of the angel's account are so reminiscent of the encyclopedic text that Adam, impressed

by this all, calls Raphael, proleptically, 'divine/Historian' (VIII, 6-7), using the same word that Fludd had chosen to entitle his encyclopedia. Madsen (whose work, especially on typology in Paradise Lost, more often differs with arguments made in this thesis) opposes such suggestions. He finds 'no trace [in Paradise Lost] of Hermetic correspondences and signatures and hardly any sign of the metaphors and similes provided by the bestiaries and lapidaries of which DuBartas was so fond'.<sup>35</sup> Even if Paradise Lost is clearly not littered with them (and indeed, it was seen that this made for one of the main differences between DuBartas' text and Milton's), the significance of Raphael's account and Adam's 'divine/Historian' are understated by a reading like Madsen's.

Whereas in the passages previously quoted the genesis was often described in Neoplatonic or other vaguely Christian Cabalist terms, this most elaborate statement of all is, in the first place, and on the face of it, a faithful re-working of the original text of the first book of the Bible, the poetic qualities of which are exploited to great advantage. But even though Genesis' text here occupies such a prominent place, Biblical language alone does not seem to suffice the poet. On the first day the alchemical term quintessence(VII,224) appears, and the sun 'in a cloudy tabernacle' (248) is Neoplatonic. On the second day, the use of such words as 'liquid, pure' (264) and 'elemental air' (265) again echo alchemy, a tendency that carries through into the third day ('warm prolific humour',<sup>279</sup> 'genial moisture', 282- are also reminiscent of Neoplatonism and Hermetism). The sun, made on the fourth day 'of ethereal mould' is strongly Neoplatonic and similar to Fludd's tabernacle in the Mosaicall Philosophy, only now it is called 'palace':

Of light by far the greater part he took,  
Transplanted from her cloudy shrine, and placed  
In the sun's orb, made porous to receive  
And drink the liquid light, firm to retain  
Her gathered beams, great palace now of light.  
(ibid., 359-63)

The sun, then, distributes these gathered beams to lower regions by  
Shedding sweet influence

(ibid., 375; emphasis added)

Finally, from the moment on the fifth day when God starts creating 'living soul' (387) the text conforms to the encyclopedic genre, mimicking -yet not without greatly improving on DuBartas' much more conventional specimens of the kind- God's 'Be fruitful and multiply' (396).

Raphael thus produces a truly amplified version of the creation episode which mixes the orthodox Judaeo-Christian conception with mystical and pagan ones. This practice caused some serious confusion in the literary critical world when it was argued by Saurat,<sup>36</sup> that the lines at the very beginning of Raphael's account present a Cabalist picture of Genesis' opening:

And thou my Word, begotten Son, by thee  
This I perform, speak thou, and be it done:  
My overshadowing spirit and might with thee  
I send along, ride forth, and bid the deep  
Within appointed bounds be heaven and earth,  
Boundless the deep, because I am who fill  
Infinitude, nor vacuous the space.  
Though I uncircumscribed my self retire,  
And put not forth my goodness which is free  
To act or not, necessity and chance  
Approach not me, and what I will is fate.

(VII, 163-173; emphasis added)

The lines most crucial to Saurat's argument are underlined; he took the word 'retire' to refer straight to the Lurianic theory of retraction. Whether this is right is difficult to establish, and the allegation moreover presupposes a degree of conceptual unity or uniformity that is possibly inappropriate for this text.

Just as the orthodox model of Genesis in Paradise Lost has been scattered with extraneous, often pagan, notions concerning the six days' work, here, in the treatment of the first motions of separation and limitation, orthodox Christian elements like 'the omnific Word' (217) or the Spirit (209) are seen to coexist with vaguer notions of retraction, 'vital virtue' (236), 'Like things to like' (240) -the common stock of Christian

Cabalism. It is moreover, and more importantly, the Christian Cabalist's particular ability to conceive of creation in a syncretistic manner, to cause 'foreign' doctrines to converge allegorically, in a Christian Word, that makes it possible (as it happens here) to write about creation in a variety of interrelating metaphors. This phenomenon, shown before with reference to Fludd's work, is one of the concomitants of a notion of plenitude such as the various treatments<sup>of</sup> creation in Paradise Lost also articulate.

It is hence neither from a tendency to favour Christian Cabalist doctrine over and above its orthodox, Judaeo-Christian counterpart, nor from an inclination to believe the Timaeus or Hermes' words rather than Moses', that Raphael's text derives its unorthodox, plural appearance. It is because of (religious ideas about) the nature of language and writing in and of plenitude; ideas that acknowledged (or even put to use and celebrated) human or worldly plurality in its difference from the ineffable divinity. Indeed a warning about the limitations of 'speech' had duly been given by Raphael before he commenced on the long passage:

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.

(ibid., 176-79)

The critical quarrel over the passage's diverse terminologies is often heated because something like Milton's originality is at stake, an originality the loss of which would not only cast its shadow over the poet's prestige, but at the same time bring into doubt the purity of his protestant motives. Such a view, in all its extremity, is represented by Conklin who suggests that Milton was one of a line of 'grammatical' exegetes' who worked strictly with biblical material.<sup>37</sup> J.M.Evans is a supporter of Milton's 'profound originality'.<sup>38</sup> Other critics do cautiously allow for the possibility that 'Besides Hermes and Plato [Milton] may have looked into Fludd and Boehme'.<sup>39</sup> Yet they believe that Milton could not have taken these objectionable sources too seriously. Thus R.H.West admits that 'considered in a lump, the evidence points toward some connection [of Paradise Lost] with Jewish mysticism, since

of the names [of angels] for which precedents are given here only Arioc and Ramiel are not shown to be connected either directly with the Jewish Cabala or with some Christian redaction of it, such as Agrippa's or Reuchlin's or Fludd's.' But West retreats immediately, 'On the other hand, though this may be an indication that Milton knew the Cabalistic works, his levy on them seems casual. He has used the names that suited him for poetic reasons, not for their Cabalistic symbolism.' (emphasis added)<sup>40</sup> West may well be right, but his distinction between poetic reasons and Cabalist symbolism is too vague and hastily drawn. It is exactly the possible connections between such poetic reasons on the one hand and Cabalistic symbolism on the other which this thesis tries to probe.

For readers like Adamson and Patrides, however, the possibility that Milton stood in an eclectic tradition does not threaten the poet's respectability. 'If Milton is placed in this tradition, he may lose some of his solitary grandeur, but he becomes more comprehensible';<sup>41</sup> and Patrides, partly quoting Adamson, says: 'Milton's view of creation ex Deo (...) forms part of an "ancient and honourable Christian tradition" that possibly began with Plotinus and was conveyed by the proponents of the via negativa into the Renaissance'.<sup>42</sup> This Christian tradition incorporates Platonic as well as Hermetic and Pythagorean elements and hence (except for Pico's Cabalist inclusions) seems to coincide with Christian Cabalism. Adamson, indeed, in another article, indicates Cabalist echoes elsewhere in Paradise Lost.<sup>43</sup> Christopher Hill, like the previous two critics, is ready to accept Milton's 'unoriginality', and affirms a Christian Cabalist indebtedness of Paradise Lost. He, however, ascribes this to the materialism which he believes Milton shared with the English revolutionaries.<sup>44</sup>

This thesis forfeits the ideal of originality in favour of a notion of the poet (and his work) as being more exposed to his intellectual surroundings than that ideal would allow for. This would seem all the more appropriate in the case of Paradise Lost which itself seriously questions such notions as originality.

The fragmentary accounts of creation considered before as well as Raphael's crowning speech all partake of a similar literary eclecticism.

Even as various characters shed their various lights on the events, so Raphael must employ many tongues to do justice to divine fulness in the medium of difference, language. Paradise Lost offers no privileged speech, not even at the beginning:

[Adam and Eve] each morning duly paid [their orisons]  
In various style, for neither various style,  
Nor holy rapture wanted, they to praise  
Their maker,  
(V, 145-48; emphasis added)

It is impossible to 'copy' the abundance of creation straightforwardly, to preserve in human words the divine 'immediate'. As Cave has shown in his study of the topos of copia, 'copy' is not simply reproduction: it also involves a notion of abundance.<sup>45</sup> Thus it denotes the specifically human, linguistic way of presenting or praising God's plenty in excess, or in abundant speech, or in writing. Similarly, the notion of perfection in the poem is not unambiguous. In creation (the metaphor is temporal) where God's perfection -Kairos- manifests itself in time -Chronos- , fulness becomes articulate. The separation between a first maker and the otherness he produces results in a world of differing entities which partake in plenitude by assuming their several places.

Losses in Paradise Lost, both of place and of initial fulness or perfection, feature twice over:

thus they relate,  
Erring; for he with his rebellious rout  
Fell long before;  
(I, 740ff; emphasis added)

-at the beginning and at the end, with angelic and human exile, and both are set in the same context of mistaken sameness and obliteration of difference. Recently, Regina Schwartz similarly proposed that 'in Milton's world, to violate bounds is to fall.' The threat of chaotic formlessness and indistinctness, she argues, is a force that, together with its orderly opposite of creation and differentiation, structures the entire poem.<sup>46</sup> A deluded ambition for equality or sameness is the

leitmotif in the three speeches Satan uses to stir up revolt. First, to his company of angels, in book V:

Ye will not, if I trust  
To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves  
Natives and sons of heaven possessed before  
By none, and if not equal all, yet free,  
Equally free; for orders and degrees  
Jar not with liberty, but well consist.  
Who can in reason then or right assume  
Monarchy over such as live by right  
His equals, if in power and splendour less,  
In freedom equal?

(788-97)

Then, psychologically preparing Eve for sin with a dream vision:

Taste this, and be henceforth among the gods  
Thyself a goddess,  
(V, 77-78)

-and finally in book IX, at the scene of fatal transgression:

ye shall be as gods  
(708)

Both the poet and the good angel Abdiel point out Satan's flawed reasoning. It is:

Affecting all equality with God  
(V, 763)

And, more fully stated, as Abdiel accuses his adversary:

Unjustly thou deprav'st it with the name  
Of servitude to serve whom God ordains,  
Of nature; God and nature bid the same,  
When he who rules is worthiest, and excels  
Them whom he governs.  
(VI, 173-78)

Satan's speech itself exposes the violence he must do against reason to make his point. He speaks of knowing one's self and one's place, about order and degree (he is, after all, a ruler himself now), and correctly perceives that these do not jar with liberty. But then he links freedom with equality, in a manner quite contrary to the alignment with order and degree. For this equality is actually sameness, a return to pre-creation indifference. Order and freedom are intimately related in the conceptions that govern the poem, and choice is conceived to have relevance only where difference (or the differentiation of order) exists. The desire, however, that involves disproportionate longing for perfection beyond that difference interferes with reason and order, and thus it subverts the conditions of freedom. More than that, as Schwartz suggests, insofar as this desire ignores differentiation, the vital principle of creation itself, it purports a transgression of not only moral but, so to speak, cosmic nature because it threatens to undo the very effects of creation.<sup>47</sup>

Instances of this mistaken longing for perfection abound in Paradise Lost which is in some sense the story of misdirected desire. The immodestly ambitious project of the tower of Babel is emblematic for this kind of want. Literally, the tower, material expression of Nimrod's excessive desire, aspires to heaven. The outcome is inevitably 'Confusion' (XII,62) instead of the godlike domination with which the arrogant ruler intended to subdue and 'tyranize. (Of course the political innuendo pertaining to Milton's own parliamentarian and anti-presbyterian position comes through as well.) But there are other exemplary passages. At the crucial moment, Eve:

Greedily (...) engorged without restraint,  
(IX, 791; emphasis added)

and she persuades Adam, who eats:

fondly overcome with female charm.  
(ibid., 999; emphasis added)

The eating of the one forbidden fruit symbolizes the fatal desire of reaching beyond one's place, or, in a temporal metaphor, the desire to attain the perfection and closure belonging to Kairos alone, through

becoming forgetful of Chronos. Eve's experiences with the promised transcendence are shortlived and frenzied. In her ominous dream she eats the apple and:

Forthwith up to the clouds  
With him I flew,  
(V, 86-87)

-and the couple sink into a disturbed post-coital sleep after their transgression. But both the flight and the sated sleep are very transient extasies in which Eve, respectively, finds herself 'suddenly' left alone, and 'sunk down' (V, 90-92), while the 'amorous play' (IX, 1045) returns her and Adam to earth all too soon, for the first time bereft of their earlier natural eloquence:

waked  
Shorn of [their] strength, they destitute and  
bare,  
Of all <sup>their</sup> virtue: silent, and in face  
Confounded long they sat, as stricken mute,  
(ibid., 1062-64)

Far from having soared beyond time and limitation, those who have sought the closure of perfection have found the same limitation. But worse, now, this limitation is liable to turn against them. From now on, Kairos and Chronos do not coexist easily anymore. The fallen world is basically the same as it was before the fall; Evans says, 'a difference of degree, not of kind',<sup>48</sup> for the works of creation have been completed a while earlier. But transgression has

Brought death into the world, and all our woe  
(I, 3)

and the perfection in limitation in which the first couple found itself so naturally, now must be recovered elsewhere and actively, through 'Deeds (...), faith (...) virtue, patience, temperance, <sup>(...)</sup><sub>λ</sub> love' (XII, 582-84), as:

A paradise within thee,  
(XII, 587)

-which is a crucial notion itself, treated in a later chapter.

In their fall, both Satan and the human couple have sinned against the principle of difference. As a result Adam and Eve are banished to a world in which that difference is not anymore implicit or naturally involved in (Edenic) excess but, often, palpably known through want and pain:

Thy sorrow I will greatly multiply  
By thy conception; children thou shalt bring  
In sorrow forth, and to thy husband's will  
Thine shall submit, he over thee shall rule.  
(X, 193-96)

And

Cursed is the ground for thy sake, thou in sorrow  
Shalt eat thereof all the days of thy life;  
(...)  
In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,  
Till thou return unto the ground,  
(ibid., 201-206)

As Paradise Lost draws to its conclusion it does not do so in the comfortable (en-)closure of the selfsufficient pre-lapsarian world, or with the fatally desired perfection of transcendence attained. Instead, Adam and Eve are sent into the post-lapsarian world:

The world was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and providence their guide;  
(XII, 646-47)

Even as the protagonists of the story are left at a new beginning, so the poem concludes with narrator and audience sharing their place, still, in the middle of things. In Paradise Lost questions of closure are examined thematically as well as structurally: through the issue of perfection and its related notions of equality, similarity and difference, on the one hand, and through the use of various voices in the presentation of the events of creation, on the other. Neither thematically nor structurally does the poem incline toward a solution that would facilitate such closure. Fludd's work, because of its nature

as encyclopedic text, yet with an obvious lack of self-consciousness compared to Milton's, confronts very similar problems concerning closure and plenitude, and shares with Paradise Lost its incorporation of many voices or texts and its preoccupation with questions of similarity and difference. Moreover, the role of Christ the redeemer, the agent of finality, is limited in Fludd's works as well as in Paradise Lost. In the latter work, significantly, the coming of a redeemer, the possibility of truly ending by 'this world's dissolution' (XII, 459) forms not the conclusion of the poem, though many critics seem to think it near enough the end for that purpose. In this respect too, Paradise Lost is placed in the middle of things. On the one hand: between the creation, the fall it describes and the last judgement; on the other hand: written long after what Michael has shown Adam in a vision:

[Moses] grants what they besought  
Instructed that to God is no access  
Without mediator, whose high office now  
Moses in figure bears, to introduce  
One greater,  
(XII, 238-43)

-Messiah, the son of God, or the Word. 'In full time' (301) this mediator will

bring back  
Through the world's wilderness long wandered man  
Safe to eternal paradise of rest.  
(ibid., 313-14)

Written before full time and not yet in the eternal paradise of rest, Paradise Lost leads out or opens up into the world of words. In the next chapter the fate of such words is discussed.

Part II

Chapter four The Mirror

Suppose, we said, that the tumult of a man's flesh were to cease and all that his thoughts can conceive, of earth, of water, and of air, should no longer speak to him; suppose that the heavens and even his own soul were silent, (...) suppose that his dreams and the visions of his imagination spoke no more and that every tongue and every sign and all that is transient grew silent - for all these things have the same message to tell, if only we can hear it, and their message is this: We did not make ourselves, but he who abides for ever made us.

Suppose (...) they fell silent and he alone should speak to us, not through them but in his own voice, so that we should hear him speaking, not by any tongue of the flesh or by an angel's voice, not in the sound of thunder or in some veiled parable, but in his own voice, the voice of the one whom we love in all these created things; (...) so that this single vision entranced and absorbed the one who beheld it (...) - would not this be what we are to understand by the words Come and share the joy of our Lord?

-Augustine, Confessions, IX, 10

Section one

H. Grabes, in his book The Mutable Glass, has written about the uses, during the English Middle Ages and Renaissance, of the mirror *topos* which appears especially frequently between 1550 and 1600. He points out that:

The mirror was more than just the chosen vehicle for many different conceits (...) it was itself a metaphor for the conceit (...) for the poetic of correspondences.<sup>1</sup>

For the mirror and its workings were obviously 'suited to a particularly noteworthy variety of symbolic, analogizing and metaphorical applications'.<sup>2</sup> The *topos*, germane to a context in which the world was thought of as a chain of being, presided frequently over books offering 'a comprehensive presentation of a larger reality',<sup>3</sup> such as the encyclopedia, the compendium or manual. Even so, Grabes argues, the mirror *topos* or metaphor functioned more frequently as a moral/didactic

figure than as an epistemological one. But Grabes' examples frequently include uses of the mirror metaphor whose epistemological overtones he cannot ignore. As he observes himself, these epistemological connotations of the *topos* may 'serve as the basis for moral improvement'.<sup>4</sup> A case in point is the idea of the mirror of fantasy or imagination which warned against the falsification of external perception by the senses.<sup>5</sup> Here the metaphor is clearly related to unfavourable notions of passivity, materiality and instability which lie behind this distrust of the senses.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes the metaphor stresses the distinction between subject and object rather than its capacity for doubling them.<sup>7</sup> Grabes' own findings point to the dual value of the metaphor as showing up both similarity and difference, something inherent to all representation and reference. Thus, even if Grabes' own interests lead him to find a preponderance of the moral/didactic metaphor, its roots in and connection with the epistemological knot of representation are beyond doubt.

Alastair Fowler has rightly criticized Grabes' 'diachronic generalization',<sup>8</sup> that during the period 1200-1700 'no great changes in the world picture can have taken place'.<sup>9</sup> This observation is part of Grabes' relative neglect of epistemology, as Fowler's remarks about the 'sharp increase of reflexiveness of thought during the Renaissance' suggest. Increased (interest in) reflexiveness is also mentioned by Rosalie Colie when she writes about the Renaissance revival of paradox, a mode she calls self-referential or speculative.<sup>10</sup> The Latin for mirror was, of course, speculum.

It is as if the material nature of the looking glass (or its earlier equivalents) and the manner it affirms the visibility of things, suggested a trope through which initial, divine plenitude could be conceived as crystallizing itself into perceptible shape. The notion of the mirror could illustrate more than the ontological relation between God and his creation, as when in Genesis man was introduced as the image and likeness of his maker. There was also the mirror's emblematic involvement with (derivative) questions concerning words and their meanings, the way texts, similarly, 'reflected' the reality they wrote about. If the notion of representation indeed appears eminently to embody these doubling qualities of the looking glass, it is not thereby freed from the complexities riddling the concept of plenitude. In the case of

the latter what has been all along and in the fulness of being, must be made present once more. 'Must', because this re-presentation looks for a reduplication so complete as to undo itself by lapsing into coincidence with its original, with what it stands for. No seam, rift or gap is allowed to remain visible: representation aims to be total and therefore transparent. And just as man, to follow the principles of plenitude, must aspire to divinity or transcendence and cross the ontological gap between his being and that of his father/maker, words must become full speech, bridging the divide between mere phenomenality and things-as-they-are. This imperative governs the commonplace of the mirror and gives rise to the texts and the language with which this thesis is concerned. The difficulty of attaining this ideal forms a vital source of inspiration in the Renaissance and participates in the creation of its mood of assertion and expression.

Language, considered from the ideal of the mirror *topos*, is only ideally capable of reflecting the truth truthfully. Rather than highly polished little looking glasses, words and sentences had from early on been experienced as obstacles. The seventeenth century German mystic Jakob Boehme found the relations between the spoken (or written) word and the reality it aspires to be in tune with particularly difficult. Between the heart and the universal spirit lay the tricky tongue which transformed man's inner spirituality on its way out into sensible, 'material' shapes, unfit for that purpose. Boehme's preoccupation with the inadequacy of speech had an added poignancy since it was also derived from a personal sense of inferiority and ill-fittedness for his vocation. He was a 'Philosopher of the simple' by his own admission, lacking in education and with a tongue 'too stupid':

If our philosophers and doctors had not always played the courtly fiddle but on the violin of prophet and apostles, no doubt there would have been a different knowledge and Philosophy in the world. My weakness and little education as well as my stupid tongue make me almost too small for it, but in Knowledge I am not too simple. Only I cannot deliver it according to deep speech and decorousness. Yet I am satisfied with my gift and am a Philosopher of the simple.<sup>11</sup>

Earlier, Augustine meditated copiously on the problem of res and verbum, metaphysical truth and language, and suggested to medieval man how to handle it. The solution was spiritual surrender, leading to what J.A.Mazzeo has coined a 'Rhetoric of Silence'.<sup>12</sup> How much Augustine valued this silence (of things, of reality) behind words can, according to Mazzeo, be gathered from its role at the crucial moments in Augustine's own life. St.Ambrose, the encounter with whom was a key-event in the long process of Augustine's conversion, greatly impressed the latter when he was found reading silently and not half-aloud in the manner common then. This kind of silence became symbolic when Augustine's conversion was accomplished: he himself now read noiselessly. Yet Augustine's attitude to silence does not entail an outright denial of words. Mazzeo also mentions 'the pleasure of obscurity'<sup>13</sup>, a pleasure Augustine especially writes about at the end of his Confessions, where he strongly argues in favour of plurality of interpretation as a response to the Biblical injunction to be fruitful and multiply.

In the Middle Ages this promisingly sophisticated attitude to language was however outweighed by notions of it which represented either of two sides. Whereas medieval doctors' preoccupation with grammar and logic revealed their relative lack of concern for the relationship between metaphysical truth and language, the late medieval nominalists' attention to such problems led them to despair of any relationship at all. With the arrival of the Renaissance the complicated relations between res and verbum get confronted with farreaching results.

Something in the process of reflection or representation itself made it possible in the Renaissance to envisage spiritual knowledge and ascent itself as the result of, or at least, as coextensive with, human expression and assertion rather than as its polar opposite. Fludd's works make it clear that the lofty metaphysical aspiration has not changed: man must become transparent, invisible, in order to be reassumed into his origin. Yet this search for pure representation leads now via increasing self-awareness and awareness of the material world, through the use of words. In her book Milton and the Science of the Saints Georgia B.Christopher speaks of an analogous shift of emphasis.<sup>14</sup> She discusses the changed meaning of the Hebrew word **תֹּתֶת** which denotes both word and thing, verbum and res, arguing that as earlier emphasis on thing is

replaced with one on word, religious experience gets redefined as literary experience.

### Section two

There are two Ways of coming to the Knowledge of Things: the Way of Perfection and the Way of Negation:<sup>(...)</sup> In the Way of Perfection; we cannot exceed; (...) If you speak of Man's Soul; you may say too much; But speaking of God, you cannot transcend Divine Existence, in the Enumeration of any Perfections (...) In the Way of Negation, we are also certain: For we cannot remove Imperfection, Contraction, Limitation, far enough from him.<sup>15</sup>

Benjamin Whichcote's words pin down (setting out from 'knowledge' but in fact treating of speech and language) with unusual exactness the two poles between which he, and many others, formulated their ideas about words. On the one hand, negation, reminiscent of Cusa's via negativa, where words, simply by being what they are, indicate divine plenitude as what is necessarily and always beyond them. On the other hand, perfection denotes the requirement that words coincide with that divine plenitude through an excessiveness still always exceeded by their object. Clearly, these two poles are sides of one coin, showing divine fulness as too much for a chronically impoverished language even when that language becomes 'even more' and dangerously exorbitant. Words are imperfect as well as excessive -but they are the way man masters knowledge. Whichcote stresses that both 'ways' are valid: 'we are also certain (...)'.

The Cambridge Platonists were not merely Platonists, for theirs was, as C.A.Patrideres points out:

a return to a tradition which included many more philosophers besides Plato, the Neoplatonists, the Greek Fathers, and the thinkers of fifteenth century Florence. This tradition was rooted in "the primitive theology of the Gentiles" which according to Ficino had begun with Zoroaster or perhaps with the mythical Hermes Trismegistus; had passed thence to Orpheus and Pythagoras and several others, and had at last found its way "entire" into the books of "our Plato".<sup>16</sup>

Unlike their Christian Cabalist compatriots Dee or Fludd, the Cambridge Platonists were academics and clergymen, and their use of non-Christian thought is more restrained and controlled, leading to nothing like the others' esoteric excrescences. But their language did now and then approach a similar extravagance and this is true not only for the work of Henry More which came nearest to being associated with Cabalism. Here is a passage from Ralph Cudworth, Regius professor of Hebrew:

The strong Magick of Nature, pulls and draws everything continually (...) In like manner Hell wheresoever it is, will by strong Sympathy pull in all Sinne, and Magnetically draw it to it self:<sup>17</sup>

Patrides, quoting Whichcote's disavowal of the 'mystical, symbolical, Aenigmatical, Emblematical' form of Christianity, underlines that writer's nonetheless charged use of the word spiritual:

the word which (...) confirms the connexion between the mundane and the celestial, the visible and the transcendental, Nature and Grace (...), the point where the rational and the spiritual merge.<sup>18</sup>

Still, it is the notion of reason together with the Platonic motif of love or goodness that pervades the Cambridge Platonists' writing consistently. For them the relations between God and man are ruled by the triad of goodness and love (denoting man's voluntary and unhesitating surrender to the divinity, a surrender which imitates and reciprocates the love God bestows on his creation) and by reason, which is not exactly an independent faculty man exercises at will, but rather something natural and God-given by which, in the first place, man conceives of such essentials as God's existence:

We know in Reason, that first Principles are self-evident, must be seen in their own Light, and are perceived by an inward Power of Nature. For, as we say, out of nothing comes nothing; so, grant nothing; and nothing can be proved. <sup>Wherefore</sup>  $\lambda$  it must be within the Reach of Reason, to find that there is a God;<sup>19</sup>

Good or right reason by definition goes hand in hand with love or good deeds, but equally, true goodness cannot be without the use of reason:

The reason why, notwithstanding all our acute reasons and subtle disputes, Truth prevails no more in the world, is, we <sup>so</sup> often disjoyn Truth and Goodness.<sup>20</sup>

Here reason is not quite the faculty which later justifies man in approaching his world by abstract logical rules, even though there is an obvious connection. True to their Platonism, the Cambridge scholars conceived of reason as an innate capacity to re-cognize divine truth. Like the Platonic power of memory (anamnesis) it is closely associated with love.

It is this insistence of the Cambridge Platonists on reason and goodness which facilitates comparison with the more unambiguously esoteric thought that commended the contemplation of the world through, or indeed as, continuous reference to God. Both Cambridge Platonism and Christian Cabalism ascribe initiative to man, an active role in his search for Knowledge. Here are two quotations from Henry More's Conjectura Cabballistica to illustrate the importance he attaches to man's own, well-directed use of reason:

But quite to take away all the Passions of the Minde in stead of composing them to the right rule of Reason and the divine Light, is as if a man should cut away the strings of an Instrument, in stead of tuning it.<sup>21</sup>

And:

Otherwise if we bid all Reason, and History, and Humane helps and Acquisitions quite adieu, the world will never be rid of Religious Lunacies and Fancies.<sup>22</sup>

But Henry More's attention here to knowledge, and even to science, also distinguishes him from other Cambridge Platonists and signals his special proximity to Christian Cabalism. For the principal difference between the two schools of thought is that while Cambridge Platonism favours a generally moral solution to the question of 'reflecting' the divine truth (through notions of imitative and exemplary action), Christian Cabalism puts more stress on the possible ways to knowledge offered by the via negativa.

The Platonists' final recourse to morals can be illustrated by a look at some of their works. In them problems concerning the relationship between truth and man's perception of it, between things and words, figure as regularly as in Christian Cabalist writings. As will be seen, however, finally the solution here is found in moral terms.

Nothing, says Whichcote,

of the Natural State is base or vile. Whatsoever hath Foundation in God's Creation, or whatsoever the Providence of God calls any Man unto, it is not base. For our Saviour himself took Flesh and Blood: and that is the meaner Part of Humane Nature.<sup>23</sup>

And elsewhere he stresses this again:

Every Creature is a line leading to God. God is everywhere, in every thing. So we cannot miss of him. For the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and every Grass in the Field declares God.<sup>24</sup>

Yet Whichcote's enthusiasm cannot obscure the other, more restrained, side of the coin. Sense perception, the use of which he seems to encourage and sanction, involved the subtle workings of the imagination. And the imagination, as this chapter will show, was an equivocal power, necessary but unreliable. The world, approached with an unpurified eye could also be a dangerous place, a degrading trap:

To be always bent down to the desire of the body and worldly delights, that motion is Bestial.<sup>25</sup>

And Cudworth writes:

Knowledge indeed is a thing farre more excellent than riches, outward pleasures, worldly dignities or any thing else in the world <sup>the</sup> besides Holinesse, and Conformity of our wills to the will of God: but yet our happinesse consisteth not in it, but in a certain Divine Temper & Constitution of soul which is farre above it.<sup>26</sup>

Only through a purification (here in alchemical metaphor) does the eye or the mind perceive something like the truth:

We must be reformed within, with a Spirit of Fire, and a Spirit of Burning, to purge us from the Drosse, and Corruption of our hearts; and refine us as Gold and Silver;<sup>27</sup>

And thus are introduced the strange workings of the mirror. For the reason behind this need for purification, or as it is often expressed, for the leading of a holy life, lies with the mirrored nature of (good) knowledge. Whichcote speaks of man's duty to 'seek after God':

it is the proper Imployment of Mind and Understanding, to seek after God, to act our Faculties, to feel God (...) There is a natural and indelible Sence of Deity, and consequently of Religion, in the Mind of Man.<sup>28</sup>

But as John Smith's words explain, that search is troubled because of the 'reflective' preconditions for its success:

as the Eye cannot behold the Sun (...) unless it be Sunlike, and hath the form and resemblance of the Sun drawn in it; so neither can the Soul of man behold God (...) unless it be Godlike<sup>29</sup>

And again:

Such as Men themselves are, such will God himself seem to be<sup>30</sup>

The theory of vision which inspires these above quotations is a mixture of ideas from Empedocles, according to whom the object of vision was impressed on the eye by rays emitted by this object (intromission), and Euclid, who conceived of the eye sending rays to capture the object before it (extramission).<sup>31</sup> The fact that intro- and extramission often appeared together to explain the process of perception, goes hand in hand with the great popularity that the mirror metaphor and its attached notions of correspondence and reciprocity enjoyed. On the one hand, it could be alternately the object or the subject who emitted rays, on the other, both the eyes and the things seen could equally well constitute a mirror. Indeed, as Grabes pointed out, the fact that Neoplatonism rendered Plato's shadows as mirror images is significant here, for unlike shadows, mirror images can be reflected infinitely. Between two mirrors the image recedes endlessly into two mutual corridors. In metaphysical poetry where the mirror constituted a well-loved conceit, virtually any object in the world (including the world) could function as a looking glass; the eye just as much as the tears dropping from it, as well as the beloved woman who had provoked them.

Thus in a world of plenitude, perception is not only a particular form of knowledge but also one more manifestation of the principle of correspondence. Just as the macrocosm is reproduced or repeated in the microcosmic structure of man (which includes both his soul and his exterior parts), knowledge, visual or otherwise, corresponds. Ideally this correspondence is with a transcendental truth, but one has only to think of the misfortune of beautiful Narcissus, pining away for love of his reflected form, to realize that reflection may yield a less revealing image. It is of crucial importance to be attentive to the reflected nature of the mirror image.

Unfortunately, then, knowledge originates from both reflection and correspondence for we cannot 'in these earthly habitations',

see *אַפְקָדָה בְּאַפְקָדָה* in *Speculo Lucido*: here we can but in a glass, and that darkly too.<sup>32</sup>

This predicament confronts man continuously with the facts of his human condition. For Henry More, the *speculum lucidem* is attained only when flesh turns into ice, exchanging its excitable, inconstant and material nature for the fixed transparency of frozen water:

Shall Envy, shall Hatred, Shall Lust, Ambition, Luxury etc. shall all these enormous Desires and Affections be cast out of the Soul by Sanctity and Purity, that she may be but a transparent piece of Ice, or a Spotless fleece of Snow?<sup>33</sup>

The chill metaphor in combination with the question mark illustrate More's struggle to renounce the warm fallibility of his humanity. The associations with a metamorphosis into a 'statue of Alabaster (...) [no] more than a cleanly Sepulchre of a dead starved Soul',<sup>34</sup> convey the ambivalent response, or even the resistance, aroused by this demand for purity. Yet eventually More breaks through his shiverings with some determination:

Nay, certainly all this cleansing and preparing is for something well worth that labour (...) it (...) brings in, upon that deadness and privation of other Passions, that divine motion of the Soul which is Love or Goodwill to all Mankind<sup>35</sup>

The daunting process of purification can be deferred in More's thought as something he may become equal to in a distant future. The inadequacy of his words of course is something he must face more frequently:

The word spoken perisheth with the speaking (...) The written Word is indeed longer-liv'd, but Paper and Ink is not incorruptible and immortal (...) The Word of God then is safe no where but in his own bosom, cypher'd within himself in his own mind<sup>36</sup>

Mirror rules function on every stratum of creation (and not only to denote the way man's being is linked with God's) they also pervade the realm of language. Time and again the Cambridge Platonists stress the insufficiency of the mere, material word:

I do not urge the Law written upon Tables of stone without us (...) but the Law of Holiness written within upon the Fleshly Tables of our hearts.<sup>37</sup>

And:

Neither can [the Spirit or Life] where indeed it is, expresse it self sufficiently in Words and Sounds, but it will but declare and speak it self in Actions<sup>38</sup>

Thus, following the laws of correspondence: the greater the proximity between words and things, the better. Egyptian hieroglyphs provide the example:

Neither can [spiritual life] where indeed it is, expresse itself sufficiently in Words and Sounds, but it will best declare and speak it self in Actions: as the old manner of writing among the Egyptians was, not by Words but Things. (...) Words are nothing but the dead resemblances, and Pictures of those Truths, which live and berath [sic] in Actions:<sup>39</sup>

But no script can escape the fate of representing insufficiently. So when Toth, in Plato's Phaedrus comes to offer Thammuz the ill gift of writing (hieroglyphs, presumably), the latter emphatically refuses.<sup>40</sup>

These material traces will only constitute an obstacle (finally they will even subvert Thammuz' own authority). They will harden living truth into mechanically reproducible signs and will make redundant the living memory by which man is joined to the realm of ideas. Writing here, but often language in general, bears connotations of separation from and petrification of the divine as the world of appearances closes upon itself and rigidifies.<sup>41</sup>

But for the Cambridge Platonists the combination of reason with Christian goodness formed a guarantee against this terror of dead(ening) letters. The holy Scripture could be trusted to man's use since his godgiven reason, kindled and animated by the warmth of Christian charity, was capable of falling into tune with the Book's truth:

The Gospel, that new Law which Christ delivered to the world, it is not merely a Letter without us, but a quickning Spirit within us. Cold Theorems and Maximes, dry and jejune Disputes, lean Syllogistical reasonings, could never yet of themselves beget the least gllympse of true heavenly light, the least sap of saving Knowledge in any heart, (...) The secret mysteries of a Divine Life, of a New Nature, of Christ formed in our hearts; they cannot be written or spoken, language and expressions cannot reach them; neither can they ever be <sup>truly</sup> <sub>λ</sub>understood, except the soul it self be kindled from within, and awakened into the life of them.<sup>42</sup>

The 'Letter without' us instructively means not only 'outside us' or external, but also refers negatively to the full word, a word in which 'we' are wholly involved and which does not escape us as a mere flatul voci. The Gospel, it is implied, is a letter with(in) us.

The Platonists share some important views with other more or less contemporaneous thinkers, especially Christian Cabalists. Their ideals of goodness and knowledge critically depend on the mirror principle of reflection, the correct working of which was by no means always certain. But unlike the Christian Cabalists, the Platonists' main preoccupation is with morals. The texts here quoted, for example, are mainly sermons, and the prominence in them of the word 'goodness' is apparent. Imitatio Christi was one mirror precept that had attracted the longstanding attention of Christian theologians. The Cambridge Platonists' way of

overcoming the divide between celestial and mundane, truth and phenomenon, was essentially a religious, moral one which turned away from the epistemological vicissitudes of representation. Questions of true knowledge and adequate writing were superseded by answers in terms of faith and a good life. Milton's references in Paradise Lost to the redemptive value of Christian demeanour and to the experience of inner illumination, in this respect, distinguish themselves by the way they do not occlude important questions of knowledge and representation.

### Section three

The question of representation and reflection is addressed very specifically in the English texts of the late 16th and early to mid 17th century about the nature of poetry. It may be observed that even though two of the literary theorists or critics of the time were interested in Christian Cabalism (Henry Reynolds and Philip Sidney), these poetics had no immediate concern with that tradition. Nevertheless the critical texts often testify to the same problematics of representation which give rise to the linguistic practices and central preoccupations of the Christian Cabalist texts.

Literary criticism was not written in late Tudor and early Stuart England to the extent that it was at the same time, and even earlier, in Italy. (There is little agreement as to the influence the Italians had on the English. J.W.H. Atkins believes very little while J.E. Spingarn thinks the opposite: 'Those who have some acquaintance (...) with the literary criticism of the Italian Renaissance will find an account of the Elizabethan theory of poetry a twice told tale.'<sup>43</sup>) An attempt to formulate coherent and complete theories of poetry was not made in this country. Yet there remain a considerable number of texts concerned with the subject.

The strong impact made by the re-discovery of classical texts and the subsequent need to handle, translate and incorporate them into an established corpus of knowledge all help to explain the heightened critical and theoretical activity in Renaissance Italy. This country, however, never saw the intense academic discussions and heated arguments

which affected Italian poetics, the vivid and fertile dialogue between Horatians, Aristotelians, Platonists and those ranging between them.<sup>44</sup>

Michael Murrin however, who has studied the poetics of England in the period around the turn of the 16th into the 17th century, observes something resembling a debate between those favouring allegory and the 'neo-classicists' whose interest in form and art for their own sakes was often declared in defences of rhyme.<sup>45</sup> The allegorists, who thought themselves descendants of an ancient prophetic tradition, saw poetry as the medium that (delightfully) transmitted essential truths. For them, it was a particular (and ideal) form of education, the pleasant coating around a difficult core. This attitude to poetry, Murrin argues, was gradually superseded by one in which the medium itself gained density and weight as it grew less and less subservient to expressing the (moral) truth. The poet as a manipulator and interpreter of signs, the poet as the inspiratus who diffuses knowledge through the captivating images of his art, now makes place for a man more self-conscious about his work.<sup>46</sup> He is an artist in the first place, a man in charge of his own business. If he imitates anything it is not a pre-existing, eternal truth but (the abstract rules of) his medium. Forgotten classical poets are read again and their style and subjects are emulated. The universe of writing folds in upon itself.

Yet this change occurs slowly and these two positions manifest themselves as such only in fragments clogged with the very stuff that previously linked them. Looking at the Italian Cinquecento (where he has distinguished a movement from res to verba analogous to the one Murrin speaks of with reference to the English 17th century) Weinberg firmly stresses the continued preponderance of the moral, didactic or revelatory element in its poetics.<sup>47</sup> Associated primarily with Platonic poetics and, to a lesser degree, with Horatianism, this didacticism (says Weinberg) is almost invariably read into the Renaissance interpretations of Aristotle's Poetics. Whether the theoretician be inclined to stress the formal, rhetorical or religious/ideal aspect of his poetics, all these are eventually and as yet the means through which an audience is taught in the most effective way.<sup>48</sup>

Like Weinberg, Murrin finds that at least part of his territory is marked by its heterogeneous nature. Sidney and Jonson, for instance, are seen as transition figures in the debate between allegory and neoclassicism, and so is Milton. None of them fully occupies either of the two positions, allegorist or neoclassicist.

This piece of literary critical history has its bearing on the *topos* of the mirror. The mirror-like quality of words gradually thickens and becomes clouded over until they are not considered fit anymore even to suggest the possibility of the perfectly polished mirror through which true reality was to be approached. But this obfuscation lends words a solidity which makes them tangible to an unprecedented degree. They now acquire a value which is not essentially that of (neutral) carriers of truth.

Michel Foucault, in the second chapter of The Order of Things, has treated the concept of the mirror-like quality of language (especially of writing) as a phenomenon typical of the 16th century.<sup>49</sup> He scrutinizes especially notions of resemblance, similitude and correspondence. In the Renaissance things and words signified (he suggests) through their multiple resemblances, which themselves, in turn, resided in signs, recognizable via yet more similitude and correspondence. Under the 'sovereignty of the Same', no thing escaped the fate of appearing to point at an other which was in the very same situation. It is doubtless because of a similar perception that Walter Pater called allegory (of which, unfortunately, Foucault has little to say) a 'madhouse cell'.<sup>50</sup> For Foucault the world of the mirror is closed, bound and filled up completely by the sign. In it correspondence points backward in vain, to a resemblance that cannot step out of itself, through the mirror, into the world of the original. Being thus essentially (self-)enclosed, the world of resemblance both establishes allegory as the foremost literary mode of the mirror, yet at the same time categorically prevents it from working. Such an analysis sheds light on Murrin's notion of a transitional mode. Allegory contains the very principle generating the 'neoclassical' writing that is to replace it: the basic self-enclosedness of reference and by consequence, its final incapacity to fully illuminate and subserve its source. But this enclosure of itself by itself does not merely yearn for another, cooler mode of writing. More is involved here

than a transitional phase when allegory and neoclassicism briefly intermingle. The two modes of writing- often apparently on the two irreconcilable sides of the Foucaultian rift, between a world submerged in similarity and one looking at itself through the grid of difference- both of these modes are already implied and related in the concept of the mirror.

Thus 'neo-classicism' lies embedded in allegory itself, in its mirror(ing) face, and therefore, the mode of writing of 'late' Renaissance writers like Milton should be anticipated and visible in some form earlier in the period, in the works of apparently more seriously committed allegorists. Foucault underestimates the importance of this mixed mode when he speaks almost exclusively of 16th century mirror language's failure to transcend its infinitely reduplicating and receding walls. Though things could go on forever reflecting other things and though words echoed other words ad infinitum this was not the result of an exclusive preoccupation with resemblance and correspondence as Foucault conceives of it. The great archetypal act of imitation- and the one Foucault hardly pays attention to- was the first, divine one, when God created the world and man in his image. In this seminal reflection difference played a part just as crucial as its opposite, similarity. It is difficult to accept the Renaissance sovereignty of the Same as Foucault argues it while saving difference, as it were, for the next, Classical period. To do this may serve the purpose of his 'archeological' method, it proves inadequate, though, for a closer study of Renaissance texts (a study which Foucault indeed usually neglects). As Grabes has shown, it is, for instance, hardly possible to study the *topos* of the mirror without taking due note of its frequent use as an indicator of difference rather than of similarity.<sup>51</sup>

It is only with this difference that the repetition which constitutes resemblance can occur:

"Being similar" to something else is, to some extent, to be that thing, but it is also not to be that thing, since it is only being similar. Resemblance is therefore a middle term between absolute identity and absolute alterity.<sup>52</sup>

If, therefore, the sign is perceived as such it is not only by virtue of its resemblance to the thing signified but equally because of its separate existence as shadow, repetition or, sometimes, poor imitation. When a word mirrors only to bring about another mirror image this does not necessarily signify simple failure to catch a hidden, transcendent truth. By virtue of its difference, made explicit in the sheer materiality and tangibility of yet another appearance, a reflection of a reflection, this word may contribute a very positive 'negative' image of the truth. Murrin is aware of this negative mode of expression (which had already emerged with Cusa's Docta Ignorantia) in Landino's 'Agnoscendo cognoscitur': 'the prose equivalent to allegorical poetry in that both assume a truth which can be expressed only by indirection'.<sup>53</sup> Language here includes its absent other (or referent) in the negative way, while on the other hand it can only attain to its perfect self through being transformed into an other. Similar ideas have been explored already in relation to the notion of plenitude.

Hence words and appearance, the mundane, gain power and respect. Divine signatures are sought in grains of earth and in the firmament for more than their correspondence with divine knowledge, and with a pleasure (which is a religious one) in the search itself. Man, the world and words obtain dignity by reflecting (on) their difference.

In the poetics and literary criticism of the late 16th and 17th centuries the relations between art and nature, word and thing, were more complicated than simply comprising the reduplication or imitation of an original. And it is not only for the writers who were preoccupied with analogy, correspondence and allegory that the term was of central importance, but also for those neoclassicists who discovered Aristotle's Poetics. Rosemond Tuve has pointed out what imitation could mean for the Elizabethans:

The qualities of "artificiality", decorous selectivity, and relative sensuous imprecision are in fact the very qualities which mark Renaissance images as functioning toward Imitation as Renaissance writers conceived it.<sup>54</sup>

Spingarn quotes the early example of John Sturm, a Strasbourg humanist, whose thoughts about imitation illustrate those of the Elizabethans:

not the servile copying of words and phrases (...) but a "vehement and artistic application of mind" which judiciously uses and transfigures all that it imitates.<sup>55</sup>

The critical texts of the English 16th and 17th centuries show the complicated influences they absorbed. The allegorists, inspired by Florentine (neo)Platonism, adhered to a mode of writing that used analogy and correspondence, and thought of the poet as prophet or even as a second, subsidiary creator; the neoclassicists in the first place looked at the Aristotelian poetics which aroused their interest in poetic form, rhetoric, character and plot. Where, then, for the former correspondence and analogy reflected a transcendent and moral truth, for the latter, mimesis was of a more wordly reality which was often formal or psychological. As Weinberg's remark about the didactic bias of Renaissance poetics already suggests, however, these two above tendencies were not entirely separate. If allegorical poetry traced analogies it did so through didactically delightful language which needed to be given due attention itself. And as, conversely, neoclassical poetics stressed moral, utilitarian purposes, notions of truth or message never stayed long in the background. Jonathan Dollimore, investigating the notions of mimesis, imitation and making, has found that the critics he looks at (Sidney, Bacon, Greville) all undermine their ideal poetics by at some stage or another assuming the contrary attitude.<sup>56</sup>

In Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie, the gardener, painter, carpenter and poet are all seen as artificers. But, Puttenham explains, while the gardener helps nature, the painter is a 'bare immitatour' and the carpenter 'makes things and produceth effects altogether straunge and diverse'.<sup>57</sup> The poet, in this scheme, reconciles servility with inventiveness. He alters nature 'and [is] in some sort a surmounter of her skill, so as by meanes of it her owne effects shall appear more beautifull or straunge and miraculous (...).'<sup>58</sup> In this capacity of surmounter, Puttenham's poet is an Aristotelian imitator who skillfully heightens, for reasons of dramatic, cathartic effect, what is given in real life. But the Arte of English Poesie does not divide its allegiances unequally between the two great Greek philosophers. Such Platonic notions as the historical roots of poetry in prophecy, its source in divine inspiration

and even hints of a parallel with the creative powers of God, all appear in Puttenham's text. Poets were, Puttenham writes:

the first that entended to the observation of nature and her works, and specially of the Celestiall courses, by reason of the continuall motion of the heavens, searching after the first mover and from thence by degrees comming to know and consider of the substances separate and abstract, which we call the divine intelligences or good Angells (Demones)<sup>59</sup>

And they often functioned as prophets:

they came by instinct divine, and by deepe meditation, and much abstinence, (...) to be made apt to receave visions, (...) So also were they the first Prophetes or seears, Videntes<sup>60</sup>

To such a history of poetry belongs the analogy of poet and creator which Puttenham also produces:

It is therefore of Poets, <sup>thus</sup> to be conceived, that if they be able to devise and make all these things [this refers to Homer] of themselves, without any subiect of veritie, they be (by maner of speech) as creating gods.<sup>61</sup>

Puttenham opens his treatise in a decisive tone:

A Poet is as much to say as a maker<sup>62</sup>

but nevertheless distinguishes between the carpenter/craftsman who builds things 'not by participation with [nature's] operation', independently, and the slightly less adventurous poet. Indeed he recoils somewhat from his bold opening line before he has filled his first page:

And nevertheless without any repugnancie at all, a Poet may in some sort be said a follower or imitator, because he can expresse the true and lively of every thing is set before him, and which he taketh in hand to describe: and so in that respect he is both a maker and a counterfaitor; and Poesie an art not only of making, but also of imitation.<sup>63</sup> (emphasis added).

Sir John Harington who is much more certain about the secondary place of poetry (like anything else 'under the sunne', it is a Salomonic 'vanitie

of vanities<sup>64</sup>), is, notwithstanding, aware of its virtues. It teaches pleasantly and in an easily accessible way, and allegory (the usefulness of which he defends) serves, in an oft returning commonplace, for the (Platonic) 'conservation of the memorie' .<sup>65</sup> Yet even though he takes up the cause of allegory, speaks about the common roots of poet and prophet, and passionately disclaims the poet's ability to make and invent -Harington does not conceive of poetry as the mere pious copying of a pre-existent truth and he refers at this point to Aristotle:

[I might] claime a privileged given to Poet[s], whose art is but an imitation (as Aristotle calleth it), & therefore are allowed to faine what they list,<sup>66</sup>

Harington is aware that the imitation diverges from the thing imitated. Earlier on, indeed, he has defined poetry as consisting of 'two parts (...), namely invention or fiction and verse'.<sup>67</sup>

Samuel Daniel in his Defence of Rhyme warns against the injudicious emulation of classical models:

It is not the observing of Trochaicques nor their Iambicques that will make our writings ought the wiser. All their Poesie, all their Philosophie is nothing, unlesse we bring the discerning light of conceipt with us to apply it to use. It is not booke, but onely that great booke of the world and the all-overspreading grace of heaven that makes men truly iudicall:<sup>68</sup>

Daniel employs ideas like the 'discerning light of conceipt' or 'the great booke of the World and the all-overspreading grace ...' which befit the allegorist's attitude to language as secondary to reality, a vehicle for the transmission of truth. Yet this and the resistance against bare poetic technicalities suggested by his 'Trochaicques' must be read against the background of his disagreement with Thomas Campion's Observations in the Art of English Poesie'. The latter had indeed put excessive emphasis on technique, but not as a result of a neoclassical bias to the art itself. On the contrary, if Campion arouses Daniel's dissent this is due to the former's conservative conception of poetry as a mediatorial device. In the following quotation poetry is seen as

mediation, as raising or giving assistance to the mind on its way to higher spheres:

Poesy in all kind of speaking is the chiefe beginner & Maintayner of eloquence, not only helping the eare with the acquaintance of sweet numbers, but also rasing the minde to a more high & lofty conceite.<sup>69</sup>

Reynolds' Mythomystes, the epitome of allegorical poetics, is an extreme expression of this subservience of poetry to theology and 'naturall Philosophie'. His work indeed is mainly about the latter rather than about poetry. But Daniel by no means resents books and words, as his abovequoted words may suggest. He objects to them when they are there merely to reflect or substitute for life, the world of 'Action':

It is not the contexture of words , but the effects of Action ,  
that gives glory to the times;<sup>70</sup>

In this conception the world and the word are not made of the same material, the one reduplicating or reflecting the other without complications. Daniel problematizes the assumptions about reflection that are behind allegory. Books or words cannot tell so much about the world as about themselves. And the world of action constitutes a realm that is not exactly or symmetrically covered by them. Daniel's initial 'great booke of the World' in combination with his attitude against 'Trochaicques' misleads if it only recalls Platonism and allegory. But it does once more illustrate the extent to which the two 'opposite' poetics need and involve one another.

Sir Philip Sidney who wrote the best known and most sustained text on poetry provides the best example of this kind of blending:

We must see, if we cannot yet clearly distinguish, these three strains [Horatian, Ciceronian, Platonic] working in Sidney. His understanding of the nature of poetry is Horatian in main character and derivation, but is reinforced by a firmer, if still mainly indirect knowledge of Aristotle, than had been possessed by any earlier theorizer on Poetry in England; it is enriched still further with high Platonic notions about ideal form in art which still retain religious overtones; and it is supported throughout

by the technical instructions and moral insistence from an unbroken line of rhetoricians stretching back through the humanists to Quintilian, Cicero and Isocrates.<sup>71</sup>

The Apologie for Poetrie is not coherent although its language and composition are clear enough. If Puttenham dispatches double messages in the space of one line, Sidney confounds on a grander scale. In fact he offers a string of arguments in favour of poetry which, more than adding up to one another, often introduce diverse theories. Thus he joins (Neo)platonic memory, mystery and prophecy to Horatian delightful didactics, and to Aristotelian mimesis and better nature. This eclecticism recalls Sidney's connection with Spenser's circle, and, via them, with the Cabalist frame of thought.<sup>72</sup>

When Sidney defines the role of the poet his procedure is analogous to Pico's when he assigns man a place in the order of creation in the Dignity of Man. First, the poet is a professional who (as man in Pico's text) appears at the summit of his kind:

The Lawyer sayth what men have determined. The Historian what men have done. The Grammarien speaketh onely of the rules of speech<sup>73</sup>  
-and so follow the logician, physician and metaphysician.  
But the poet is different:

Only the Poet, disdayning to be tied to any such subiection, lifted up with the vigour of his owne invention, dooth growe in effect another nature, in making things either better then Nature bringeth forth, or, quite a newe, formes such as never were in Nature<sup>74</sup>

The poet disposes of a unique kind of freedom in which he is set apart while, still, belonging ('goeth hand in hand with Nature'):

So as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not inclosed within the narrow warrants of her guifts, but freely ranging onely within the Zodiack of his owne Wit.<sup>75</sup>

It is the very essence of this 'free ranging' conception of poetry that it should contain its own contradiction: 'hand in hand with Nature'. The note of liberty on which Sidney concludes is achieved only in conjunction

with the restraint imposed on it when the poet appears as nothing but a literary minded philosopher and educator:

no doubt the Philosopher with his learned definition (...) replenisheth the memory with many infallible grounds of wisdom, which, notwithstanding, lye dark before the imaginative and judging powre , if they beenot illuminated and figured foorth by the speaking picture of Poesie<sup>76</sup>

It is ultimately due to the complications of mirror mechanics that Sidney's Apologie may impress the reader as inconsistent. It is, in fact, a very exact record of these mechanics. Insofar as the mirror reflects it stands for the ideals of allegory, the positive issue of Plato's comment on poetry as revelation and teaching. But since the looking glass often interferes by dint of its quality and less than perfect state with the purity of the image, it also figures forth the independent status of the medium itself. Puttenham describes this duality when he talks about the fantasy or imagination:

And this phantasie may be resembled to a glasse as hath bene sayd, whereof there be many tempers and manners of makinges, as the perspectives doe acknowledge, for some be false glasses and shewe thinges otherwise then they be in deede, and others right as they be in deede, neither fairer or fouler, nor greater nor smaller. There be againe these glasses that shew thinges exceeding faire and comely, others that shew figures very monstrous & illfavored.<sup>77</sup>

Thus both the negative and positive sides of the Platonic poetics leave their mark on the Apologie, as well as Horatian emphasis on rhetoric and the Renaissance conception of Aristotle's mimesis. And mimesis itself forms another microcosm of mirror poetics as it embraces the endorsement of both making and of the old allegorical mode.

Even Bacon, Jonson and Davenant who all oppose allegory, use imitation in this equivocal sense. Hence their formal bias is always bordered with a mirror margin. Davenant, clearly using the term as more than a signal of the neoclassical, Aristotelian position, invokes imitation in its allegorical or transcendental quality to save poetry from becoming excessively rhetorical or formal:

to Imitation, Nature (which is the only visible power and operation of God) perhaps doth needfully encline us to keep us from excesses.<sup>78</sup>

And this same excess ('(...for men began to hunt more after words than after matter') leads Bacon almost straight back to the language of analogy and correspondence that constitutes allegory:

Wordes are but the Images of matter  
-while poetry proper  
was ever thought to have some participation of divinesse

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Jonson uses Aristotle's definition of imitation ('this Art, an art of Imitation'; 'expressing the life of man in fit measure') but he too balances this more mundane conception against a loftier one:

The conceits of the mind are Pictures of things, and the tongue is the Interpreter of those Pictures. The order of God's creatures in themselves is not only admirable and glorious, but eloquent.<sup>80</sup>

Allegory watches over making-in-excess just as invention saves the allegorical text from enslaving itself to its hidden truths. It is by virtue of the difference of (its) difference, that similarity can play its mirror games.

Chapter five Fludd's Mirror

Section one

Fludd's Utriusque Cosmi Historia (UCH) is an encyclopedia and hence both illustrates and investigates the principles of reflection of the mirror *topos*. The work is constructed on the topical division between the two mutually mirroring *cosmi* of man and the world. These notions were associated with other commonplaces like that of the Books of God and of Nature: indeed, Fludd's books, in their thoroughness and wide range constitute a third bookish universe. Just as the Book of Nature was thought to display a correspondence with the Book of God (or divine truth), the books of men (and especially the encyclopedia) were to emulate the whole of nature. But as a material object, the mirror and its science of catoptrics are of little interest for Fludd. The word appears often in his text, and always as the metaphor for a kind of epistemological relation. The mirror is the metaphor of metaphor. As Grabes explains, this use of the word may have been prompted by the fact that the kind of mirror commonly used in England until the seventeenth century was convex, so that it yielded a reduced, compressed image of its object. Like the mirror, the encyclopedia contained 'everything' in compressed form. Mirror mechanics are operative at the very beginning in Fludd's cosmogony, his theory of creation is governed by a notion of reduplication, of reduplication with a difference. And if God presents himself in difference, this gap or rupture at the source of creation continues to play a crucial part in other processes of re-presentation. Such processes Fludd deals with in his treatment of the imagination and of memory, the two psychological faculties that are instrumental in the transmission (or representation) of sensory perception to the mind. Thus, for instance, Fludd's art of memory tacitly acknowledges how it exceeds a notion of mere copying with invention, just as Bacon had pointed out that the orator in truth never merely or exactly could reproduce his memorized material:

For their speeches are either premeditate, in verbis conceptis, where nothing is left for invention; or merely extemporal, where little is left to memory. Whereas in life and action there is least

use of either of these, but rather of intermixtures of premeditation and invention.<sup>1</sup>

Man's own capacity to create necessarily involves these two faculties, and their workings illustrate his implication in mirror mechanics. For Fludd, man's own products, his own creations, in the form of written or spoken language, reflect this state of affairs.

In Fludd's cosmogony, mirroring correspondence is the principle of creation. Its workings are instituted in the very first acts of the divine essence. More than once Fludd invokes Hermes Trismegistus in whose writings he finds the ideal basis for these notions:

Neque enim potuit in mundi speculo quicquam videri, priusquam DEUS ei reluxit; non magis, quam hominis effigies in speculo absque ignis vel Solis lumine potest percipiri: DEUS autem ante mundi creationem sibi ipsi tantum reluxit; & in seipsum reflexit ardorem suum, teste Trismegisto. At cum mundum creare voluit, mutavit formam suam & universa subito revelata sunt, omniaque in lumen conversa, ut in I Pimander habetur. (UCH, Tom. I, 1; p. 21)

And indeed nothing could be seen in the mirror of the world before God shone upon it; no more than the image of a man can be perceived in a mirror without the light of fire or the sun. But God, before the creation of the world, shone upon himself alone and reflected upon himself his brightness, according to Trismegistus. But when he wanted to create the world he changed his form, and all things were suddenly revealed, and everything was changed into light, as is stated in Pimander I.

Reflection may even be thought of as taking place prior to creation: 'But God, before the creation of the world shone upon himself alone and reflected upon himself his brightness'.<sup>2</sup> A better way of putting this is that reflection here is immanent in creation. As the quotation shows, the mirror primarily denotes the change into visibility (and materiality) of the all. Only thereafter does this have implications for the state of God before and during the creation. A belief in notions like the all entailed that if there was visibility after the creation, it must, in some way or another, also be accounted for before it. The image of a God

reflecting (in) himself is gratifyingly expressive of the stability, self-sufficiency and fulness which characterize that notion.

The first duplication in the Hermetic doctrine stems from the contradictory need of a lonely and rather dissatisfied deity who, despite his self-sufficiency, longs for an audience to admire his splendour. The complication this causes is evident: if he wants to be seen, some additional being, another I/eye must come into existence. The impeccable fabric must tear for its very immaculateness to be shown.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Hermetic demiurge is created, while in a similarly contradictory process (of self-limitation and contraction) the Cabalist God initiates his creation. After a string of further reproductions and reflections, finally, the Hermetic archetypal Man is made. He becomes fatally involved in the material world when he succumbs to the attractions of seductive Nature, as Festugière puts it:

quand elle [la nature] l'eut vu [l'Homme] qui avait en lui même la beauté inépuisable et toute l'énergie des Gouverneurs joints à la forme de Dieu, la Nature sourit d'amour, car elle avait vu les traits de cette forme merveilleusement belle de l'Homme se refléter dans l'eau et son ombre sur la terre. Pour lui, ayant perçu cette forme à lui semblable, présente de la Nature, reflétée dans l'eau, il l'aima et il voulait habiter là.<sup>4</sup>

By consequence archetypal Man's way back to the heavenly spheres from which he came is blocked and the human race, progeny of this illicit union, appears.

Between the first reflection and the birth of man, the entire concept of mirroring is described; its good along with its bad aspects. The spatial opposition between reflection in depth -as with the first creative repetitions- and (on the other hand) the literally superficial one of the coupling between the archetypal Man and Nature, symbolizes this distinction between good and bad reflection aptly.

The principles of similarity and difference and their interplay are constituted at the roots of the Hermetic cosmogony:

ita ut recte eum jam descripserit Trismegistus, Deum terrenum,

sed mortalem; (Tom.II,1a; p.76)

so that Trismegistus has already described him [man] correctly as  
an earthly God but a mortal one;

Another formulation of this is offered in the shape of one more correspondence between man and God: they both make. But the analogy already includes terms of dissimilarity. Making may be either 'creating' or 'generating':

ut Deus est creationis autor, seu specierum creatarum pater, sic etiam ipsa creatura dignoscatur esse pater rei genitae; cum sine creaturae spermate impossibile sit, ut ulla generatio fiat, (Tom.II,1a; p.225)

as God is the author of creation, or the father of created forms, even so the creature itself should be understood as the father of begotten things; because without the seed of the creature it would be impossible for any generation to take place

The difference is between the capital and the lower case, between Father and father, or the divine and the mundane. Hence,

Est etiam Natura vis quaedam infinita ex similibus similia procreans, (Tom.I,1; p.7-8)

Nature too is a kind of infinite power, procreating like things from like

-yet that power fills up a world of great variety, full of difference. The plate discussed earlier, 'Of Nature and the Ape of Art' underneath which these words appear, has an appropriately rich design. Thanks to the fact that this bewilderingly heterogenous world is known as a differing mirror image it is worthy of contemplation. In the following quotation the difference is that between cause and effect:

PROEMIUM, IN QUO DEMONSTRATUR, QUOMODO CAUSAE PER SUOS  
EFFECTUS, HOC EST, DEMONSTRATIONE a posteriori indagentur.  
(Tom.I,1; p.13)

Proem. Wherein it is shown how causes are sought through

their effects, that is by a demonstration a posteriori.

For God,

inter omnia esse dicitur, utputa quatenus ubique dicitur esse  
praesentaliter; At vero quatenus Trismegistus appellavit mundum  
ipsius DEI imaginem (Tom.I,1; p.21)

is said to be among all things insofar, that is, as he is said  
to be present everywhere, but also insofar as Trismegistus has  
called the world the image of God himself

Fludd's attitude to the world is not the mystic's contempt for earthly  
things. His words quoted above already evince this, and here is one more  
instance:

quod ut coelum est spirituum invisibilium receptaculum, ita etiam terra sit  
animalium omnium visibilium promptuarium & myrothecium:  
Est etiam quasi cista, abundanter repleta divitijs (...) in usum  
hominum, & in honorem divinum (Tom.II,2; p.96)

that just as the heavens are the receptacle of the invisible  
spirit the earth [is] the storechamber or unguent box of all visible  
animals. She is also like a chest abundantly filled with riches  
(...) for man's use and to the honor of God

The a posteriori (and this is not the only occasion on which it is  
mentioned in UCH) echoes the positive attitude to (the observation of)  
nature of late 17th century induction, experiment and empiricism. Yet  
Fludd believed that one had to be cautious in the acquisition of  
Knowledge:

quemlibet bono quodam Angelo, atque pariter quoque malo Daemone a  
navitate stipatum esse (...) Fallit etiam atque deludit homines  
Cacodaemon, vanis somniis, aliisque consimilibus vanitatibus  
(Tom.II,1b; p.13-14)

everyone is attended by a good angel and equally by an evil demon  
from his birth (...) The Cacodemon deceives and deludes men with  
vain dreams and other similar vanities

Vanity means emptiness and here, empty knowledge. And in addition to that, it also recalls blind admiration, the deceptively beckoning image of oneself that floats on the mirroring surface of the well and which is the main obstacle to true wisdom. Thus, to apply the *a posteriori* correctly one first has to know (how to know) oneself. And this is a frequent issue in UCH.

It is quite obvious why man should search for the safe outlines of wisdom in himself. 'Know thyself' was engraved already over the temple of Apollo at Delphi and it was one of Plato's best known precepts. Since man is his own object of perception, he will, through self-knowledge, become aware of the constraints under which he takes cognizance of the rest of the world. The difficulty with this is evidently that whatever it is that limits man's view of everything except himself, it is not likely to disappear conveniently when the matter under consideration happens to be himself as such. In the first half of this century Kenneth Burke, the American critic, introduced the notion of the 'terministic screen' to indicate the (linguistic, conceptual) lattice through which man must necessarily approach reality.<sup>5</sup> That framework changes, is adapted and adjusted, depending on the context, but at no time is man able to take a total, general view without it, of 'things as they are'. Other modern critics, the poststructuralists especially, 'deconstruct' texts which only appear to be written in 'objective language' that points smoothly to an authorial voice or truth. The significance of both criticisms is that 'truth' or meaning is not in full view of itself.

But neither antiquity nor the Renaissance shared these modern notions of, or preoccupations with (self-)reference. The fascination of allegory for Fludd lay exactly with the ideal possibility of an untroubled language. Notwithstanding that, he was bound to experience problems when actually speaking or writing 'the truth'; or, for that matter, in attempting to know oneself. Montaigne was fully aware of the labyrinthine and paradoxical questions surrounding self-knowledge, and even erected his masterpiece, the Essays, on them. Rosalie Colie has directed attention to this fact in her book on paradox in the 17th century.<sup>6</sup> Even for Fludd, who writes in a different, less reflective mood, self-knowledge is a rather tricky matter:

Datum est illi tam ingentium rerum secreta scire, & seipsum

cognoscere non potest? Paucis quidem licet ipso animo animum cernere, ut ipse animus se videat. Fieri autem non potest quadam divina prudentia, ut inveniendi facultas desit religiosis animis, seipso & DEUM suum pie & caste, ac diligenter quaerentibus; (Tom. II,1a; p.64)

It has been given to him to know the secrets of such enormous things; and is he not able to know himself? It is indeed permitted only to a few to behold the soul itself with the soul so that the soul may see itself. But it cannot come about, by any divine knowledge, that the faculty of finding out should be absent from religious souls, which look for themselves and for their God piously, chastely and diligently.

And again:

Ascendere enim ad Deum est intrare semetipsum, & non solum se intrare, sed infallibili quadam modo per sui centrum transire. Hinc Mercurius Trismegistus: Qui interius transiens & intrinsecus penetrans seipsum transcendit, ille veraciter ad Deum ascendit. (Tom.II,1a; p.273)

For to ascend to God is to enter into oneself, and not only to enter into oneself, but to pass through one's own centre in some unmistakable way.

Hence Mercurius Trismegistus says, Whoever, passing into and penetrating his own inside, transcends himself, he truly ascends to God.

What is relatively straightforward in the first formulation becomes more equivocal in the second. It is not easy to understand what 'passing through one's own centre' might be and the idea of transcendence mentioned soon after clarifies only partly. It would seem that real knowledge involves a virtual transformation, nothing like a mere addition to a growing body of facts. Indeed:

Et quando internum nostrum immortale oculis spiritualibus conspexerimus, atque nosmetipsos inde rite cognoverimus, in ipsum Deum (...) transibimus. (Tom.II,1a; p.65)

And when we have looked attentively with spiritual eyes into our mortal inside, and when we thus have become properly acquainted with ourselves, then we shall pass into God himself.

This transformation, which happens in an 'unmistakable way', is truly occult. It recalls the tale of Alice and her looking glass. She too steps through something and the consequence is strikingly similar to the experience Fludd reports. Alice turns invisible,<sup>7</sup> and so does Fludd:

Invisibilem igitur me (...) reddam (ibid.)

I shall therefore render myself invisible

The paradoxical Borgesian library, mentioned in an earlier chapter, has already exemplified how man finally attains full self-knowledge when he disintegrates as a subject and object of knowledge. Man in the Borgesian library loses his own form upon return to the undifferentiated unity of the divine. This condition has some curious 'topological' consequences, duly recorded in Fludd's text too. The reader is required to conceive of man going inside himself, only in order to find (himself) outside (himself). Similarly, according to Fludd, in the first mirroring act God reflects (on) himself with the result that otherness is created. Or again, in Cabalist terms, God contracts (goes inside) himself only to find (himself) outside (himself). Inside and outside become rather like two colours on one chameleon, lighting up alternately while neither takes precedence over the other. In the act of creation as well as in the mystic's ascent,

mundus exterior est; Deus autem interior, quo nihil interius,  
nihilque praesentius; interior est omni re, quia in ipso sunt omnia  
& exterior omni re, quia ipse est super omnia.

(Tom.II,1a; p.273)

The world is without yet God is within. He -than whom is nothing more within and nothing more present is within everything because in him all things exist, and he is without everything because he is above all things.

A similar blurring of the differences between exterior and interior can be found in Pico's concept of man, who is 'interior', bound up with the material world, because of his bodily existence; but at the same time the

divine gift of his soul represents his 'exterior' alignment: with it he can escape animal creation and ascend to rejoin his maker.

As far as the subject of self-knowledge is concerned it is clear, therefore, that Fludd's description of its perfect attainment also describes the very condition under which such notions as self and other stop being relevant. Since this self-knowledge is the condition for the true understanding of perceived images, the above problems in attaining the former cause the difficulties in mirror reflection, in seeing the *apriori* in the *aposteriori*, to remain what they were.

### Section two

For Fludd, the faculty of the imagination was a part of a widely accepted psychological hierarchy inherited from the ancient world. In ascending order, first comes mere sensory perception (often called 'common sense'), then imagination, followed by memory, judgment and finally reason.

Agrippa, for example, quotes Averroes, the medieval Arab philosopher (and makes, incidentally, a not so common distinction between imagination and fantasy, dissimilar however from that made later by Coleridge):

Now the interior senses are, according to Averrois, divided into four, whereof the first is called Common sence, because it doth first collect, and perfect all the representations which are drawn in by the Outward senses. The second is the imaginative power, whose office is, seeing it represents nothing, to retain those representations which are received by the former senses, and to present them to the third faculty of inward sense, which is the phantasie, or power of judging, whose work is also to perceive, and judge by the representations received, what or what kind of thing that is of which the representations are, and to commit those things which are thus discerned, and adjudged, to the memory to be kept.<sup>8</sup>

And a little onward Agrippa specifies the working of the fantasy and the way it mediates between 'externall' and 'internall':

it is the last impression of the understanding; (...) forms all figures, resemblances of all species, and operations, and things

seen, and sends forth the impressions of other powers unto others. And those things which appear by sense, it stirs up into an opinion, but those things which appear by the Intellect, in the second place it offers to opinion, but of itself it receives images from all, and by its property, doth properly assign them, according to their assimilation, forms all the actions of the soul, and accommodates the externall to the internall, and impresses the body with its impression.

Burton refers to a similar psychological model which does not, however, distinguish between fantasy and imagination.<sup>9</sup> Imagination often had the important task of mediating between the bare and crude material impression outside, and its formal representation in the mind, as Fludd's UCH shows:

Est itaque imaginatio similitudine corporis, per sensos corporeos ex corporum contactu extrinsecus concepta, & per easdem sensus introsum ad partem puriorum corporei spiritus reducta, eique impressa;  
(Tom.II,1a; p.188)

The imagination is also in the similitude of the body conceived by the bodily senses, conceived from without by contact with bodies and reduced by the same senses within towards the purer parts of the bodily spirit and impressed upon it.

Directed outward as well as inward, the imagination occupied an ambiguous position, which caused Bacon to speak of its 'Janus face'.<sup>10</sup> For even though the imagination only had to copy the external perception in order to make it available to the internal apparatus of judgement and reason, re-inscription from one medium unto another was a complicated matter. The somewhat self-willed imagination could not be trusted to perform its mission faithfully.

For Fludd there are three kinds of vision: sensual, imaginary and intellectual. Of these, only the last is not exposed to the wiles of the devil, for 'Diabolus' is only permitted to invade the 'thicker spirit' (spissiorum (...) spiritum) where sense and imagination get confused:

At vero animadvertendum est, quod Daemonibus permittatur spiritum

hominum possidere, attamen impossibile sit illis in lucidem mentis & rationis regionem penetrare; (Tom.II,1a; p.210)

But it should be noted that Demons are allowed to possess the human spirit, yet that it is impossible that they should penetrate the bright region of mind and reason

And again,

De tertio visionis animae genere, videlicet intellectuali, quod nunquam fallit. (Tom.II,1a; p.212)

Of the third kind of vision of the soul, namely the intellectual, which is never in error.

Although God does communicate with man directly and exclusively via this third kind of vision, this happens only very seldom. The purity and holiness it requires of its recipient,<sup>11</sup> is such that Fludd says elsewhere that such a fortunate visionary loses his own outlines and becomes invisible. Moreover, in his introductory, cautionary words about the vissitudes of perception or vision Fludd even seems to question the very purity of the third kind of vision which he later elaborates:

In visione autem corporali saepe fallitur anima, (...) Sed & fallitur anima in visione spirituali, (...) atque illuditur; quoniam ea, quae videt, aliquando vera, aliquando falsa, atque nonnunquam perturbata & interdum tranquilla sunt.

But the soul is often deceived in corporeal vision (...) However the soul is also deceived and deluded in spiritual vision; because what she sees sometimes is true, sometimes false, and is often perturbed, then again tranquil (Tom.II,1,a; p.206- emphasis added)

For ordinary men, however, perceptual experience may be misleading as well as correct. Deception can take place on various levels, from the basically physical to the more spiritual, involving demons and transformations. So, for Montaigne, who was more sceptical of occult powers than Fludd, the main interest of the imagination seems to have been its power over man's sexual potency. But he too recognizes the midway position of the imagination between body and mind: 'all this may

be attributed to the close connection between the mind and the body whose fortunes affect one another.<sup>12</sup>

For Fludd, in his three-tiered model of vision, dreams can create false, but very accurate similitudes of people, therewith arousing sexual passion,<sup>13</sup> so that the body wrongly takes precedence over the soul and over judgment. But at the same time such a sommium or dream is potentially revelatory:

figuris tectum, & sine interpretatione intellegi non potest, hoc est, aenigmatibus obductum. (Tom.II,1a; p.208)

(that which is) covered by a figure and cannot be understood without interpretation, that is, it is covered by enigmas.

The Phantasma, another form of vision, can also be both for the better and for the worse, although in Fludd's description the experience is not particularly appealing:

quando quis dormire vix coepit, & vigilare se adhuc existimat, ac aspicere sibi videtur alios quasi in se irruentes.  
(Tom.II,1a;p209)

when someone has hardly started sleeping and still supposes himself to be awake, and it seems to him that he is being watched by others who are (as it were) rushing upon him

Of all the kinds of vision, Ecstasy seems to approach ideally smooth mirror vision nearest:

in extasi ab omnibus corporis sensibus anima alienatur & avertitur, magis,quam in somnio, sed minus,quam in morte. Anima in hac non fallitur, sed ipsa mente divinitus adjuvatur,  
(Tom.II,1a;p.209)

in ecstasy the soul is alienated and averted from all the bodily senses, more than in a dream, but less than in death. In this the soul is not deceived, but is helped by the mind itself, divinely inspired.

Still, even here man is exposed to deceptive forces. There exists a vacancy of the soul, almost invariably represented by sleep, which may

lead to ecstasy but which is also (and more commonly) vulnerable to the delusive operations of the imagination:

Magna quidem est haec revelatio, siquidem, cum bono spiritu assumitur, anima falli non potest; (ibid.)

This revelation is indeed great, for if it is conceived with a good spirit the soul cannot be deceived. (emphasis added)

One of the worst excrescences of the fantasy is described in:

De hominum in bestiarum effigies per praestigiosam veneficarum operationem transformatione. (Tom.II,1a; p.209)

of the transformation of man by the delusive operations of witches into the likeness of animals.

There the 'imaginary man' is changed in his sleep 'into beastly member and likeness'. Montaigne brings some mythical examples of such events in his earlier mentioned essay on the imagination:

Although there is nothing strange in seeing horns grow in the night on foreheads that had none at bedtime, there is something memorable about the case of Cippius, King of Italy. During the day he had been a passionate spectator at the bullfight, and all night long he had worn horns in his dreams. His forehead had actually sprouted them by the power of the imagination.<sup>14</sup>

For Fludd it is not quite as though man really changes:

Sed hoc, ni fallor, ita intelligendum est, quod Daemones quidem nesciant creare naturas, sed tamen possint aliquid facere, tale ut videatur esse illud quod, revera non est.  
(Tom.II,1a; p.209)

But this, if I am not mistaken, should be understood to mean that the Demons cannot create natures, yet they are able to make something, such that it seems to be that which in reality it is not..

Yet it is not clear how unreal the transformation is. Does 'imaginary man' imply that it is only to himself, in his misguided imagination, that

the change is visible (in the dream)? Or is it of a more tangible kind? Montaigne surely represents the first attitude. Though he believed in the effectiveness of the imagination he thought it had most power over those imbued with little reason: '(...) acting principally on the minds of the common people who are <sup>the</sup> most easily impressed.'<sup>15</sup> Though Fludd doubtless believed in the existence of demons and in the efficacy of various forms of magic, including metamorphosis, here he rather treats these phenomena in their spiritual quality, and the role of the imagination in them is clearly mediatorial.

There is only brief reference in the UCH to another use of the imagination. Except for its role in dreams and divinations it also plays a part in the work of the artist, and in the case of UCH, exclusively in that of the painter. Though a whole section of the UCH is dedicated to music, no question of art has been involved. Music is a matter of (divine) harmonies and mathematics. The composer is not mentioned, the imagination appears to be too closely attached to its visual quality to be considered in the non-visual context of music. The subject of painting does not occupy much space in the UCH -it covers a mere four pages. From the passage on 'Pictor qualis esse debeat' (Tom.I,2; p.319; The painter, what he must be) Fludd's preferences and interests are transparent:

necesse est eum Primo in artibus omnibus esse satis bene versatum;  
atque ut sit litteratus & plurimarum rerum ac fabularum,  
historiarumque cognitione praestans.

Deinde requiritur, ut laudis sit cupidus & studiosus, siquidem  
ambitio in artibus propagare perfectionem in opifice solet: (...)

Tertio requiritur, ut sit liberalis & minime sordidus; (...)

Quarto, ut sit prudens et minime ineptus (...)

Quinto, ut sit circa antiquitates optime versatus, quo antiquas  
historias recte depingere queat; (...)

Sexto oportet eum optima imaginatione esse praeditum, ut videlicet  
ridentis, aegrotantis, morientis (...) & consimilis infinitas animo  
species imaginari, & omnium, quas exprimere cupit, rerum conceptas  
animo species continere ac reddere valeat.

Septimo necesse est, ut sit in imitationis cautela praecellens;

(Tom.I,2; p.319)

It is, first, necessary that he be sufficiently well versed in all the arts, and that he be erudite, and eminent in the knowledge of many things, stories, and histories.

Next, it is required that he be eager and desirous of praise, since ambition encourages perfection in the workman (...)

Third, he must be liberal and not in the least mean (...)

Fourth, he must be wise and not at all inept (...)

Fifth, that he be excellently versed in antiquity so that he is able to depict ancient history correctly (...)

Sixth, he must be gifted with an excellent imagination so that he is able to imagine in his soul the appearances of one who laughs, one who is sick, one who is dying, and countless others of the same kind; and to retain and reproduce the appearances of all things which he wishes to express, and which he has conceived in his soul.

Seventh, it is necessary that he be excellent in cautious imitation.

These are the priorities of the encyclopedist, of the humanist educator. The painter, like any good professional, must be well versed in the arts, in history especially, since from it, presumably, he is to derive his scenes and subjects. At least the first three of Fludd's seven points are general, as they do not apply to the painter exclusively. The fourth is slightly more particular: the painter has to have a technique. And the sixth is by far the most specific: interestingly, the imagination here entirely addresses itself to 'states of the soul'. 'Imitation', on the other hand, occupying the seventh and last place on Fludd's list, is only given the briefest attention and seems to be oriented to the more dangerous aspect of image making where the painter turns outward, not to 'states of the soul'. Hence the word 'cautious' which here also might indicate the relation of mutual adjustment in which imagination and imitation were seen to coexist for the English literary critics looked at in the previous chapter.

### Section three

Something like the spiritual, internal image making, described by the sixth of Fludd's painterly qualities, is treated in more detail under the heading in Fludd's book on the Ars Memorativa.<sup>16</sup> Imagination and memory,

in the psychological model Fludd used, were closely allied. They were interacting faculties. Kester Svendsen, in his book Milton and Science, quotes a passage from La Primaudaye's The French Academie that illustrates this interaction well:

Now besides this knowledge of things present, we see plainly that there is another knowledge within of things that are absent. For our own experience teacheth us that even when our externall sences are retired and withdrawne from doing their duties, the imagination, thought, consideration and remembrance of those things we have seene, heard, tasted, smelt, touched and perceived with corporall sences remaine still in us both waking and sleeping: as it appeareth by our dreames, in which the image & resemblance of those things which the bodily sences perceived waking are represented to our internall sences when we are asleepe (...) This virtue is called Imagination, or the Imaginative vertue, which is in the soule as the eye in the body, by beholding to receive the images that are offered unto it by the outward sences. 17

Sensory or external perceptions are seen to be prepared and kept by the imagination for internal or spiritual use. The imagination, too (and not only reason and judgment), had access to the memory and could retrieve the images committed to it and act upon them. It was often described how the imagination could fabricate composite images made up out of various 'true' ones already at its disposal. These composite images would constitute new forms or forms that were themselves not to be found in reality. This kind of composition was not necessarily illicit for in some sense it was based on 'true imaginations'. In this way the artist was able (and indeed, as was seen, it was sometimes taken to be his ultimate aim) to 'help' nature or to make a better nature. Aristotle's notion of imitation had been sophisticated enough to accommodate for two kinds of 'truth', one historical and one poetic:

It will be clear from what I have said that it is not the poet's function to describe what has actually happened, but the kind of thing that might happen, that is, that could happen because they are in the circumstances, either probable or necessary. The difference between the historian and the poet is not that the one writes in

prose and the other in verse (...) The difference is that the one tells of what has happened, the other of the kind of things that might happen.<sup>18</sup>

One could conceive of this poetic composition as a form of rhetoric: the work of art would show or teach something which a mere look at the world would not convey. Memory itself, of course, was considered part of rhetoric and thus it had been treated by Cicero, Quintilian and in the anonymous Ad Herennium. As such it was not only the tool for the retention of long speeches but also a storage place for topoi to be used in the composition of orations. How imagination and memory cooperated in such enterprises is aptly demonstrated in Fludd's treatise on the Art of Memory.

When Fludd wrote it, the ancient art was going through a period of revival.<sup>19</sup> Its cultivation had always been part of the orator's skill. Cicero and Quintilian, together with the anonymous writer of Ad Herennium developed the art greatly and provided the main extant classical sources for Renaissance readers.

It must be observed that the cultivation of memory had never been merely a matter of practical interest. Indeed it could hardly have been only that. Recollection, the living memory, had been of paramount moral/religious importance in Plato's teaching. In a way, its method of inscription constituted the good reverse of (bad) writing. Its inward gaze, its spiritual notation, contrasted favourably with the superficiality of the written record which could be procured in a spiritually undemanding way. To read from a text meant to direct one's eyes outward: the use of the memory required a movement in the other direction. This did not only apply to the things man committed to his memory. Truth was eternally, albeit obscurely, present in the memory, too, not deposited there by memorizing man but, from the beginning, by the maker himself. Yates, in her fascinating study of the artes memoriae, says:

It is because Fludd's man as microcosm potentially contains the world that he can reflect it within. Fludd's occult art of memory is an attempt to reproduce or recreate the macrocosm-microcosm relationship by establishing or composing or

making conscious in the memory of the microcosm the world which he contains, which is the image of the microcosm, which is the image of God.<sup>20</sup>

The art of memory was of a potentially spiritual, religious or magical nature. Magic, that is, in the literal sense, where words, images and signs may have a spiritual potency through which they are practically effective. Ficino's talismans, for instance (like Fludd's memory palaces) were believed to attract divine influence with sympathetical powers. Memory had long worn a spiritual aura.

With this consideration in mind, Fludd's Ars Memorativa can be summarily described. It begins by dividing the memory into two parts: the natural and the artificial memory. The latter is developed by the means of a technique or an art (or sometimes it results from the taking of certain drugs), and this is the kind of memory that Fludd is interested in. He shows no interest in describing the memory. He does not care for the workings of the natural memory but only for the artifical method that might improve it:<sup>21</sup>

memoriae artificialis retentio fieri solet per assiduam phantasiae actionem, vanis & fictis idaeis ac iconibus veritatis species myrothecio memoriae imprimentem; (...) propter imaginationis propinquitatem & vicinitatem actionis ejus ad cellulam memoriae, (...) assidue quasi pulsat memoriam, & <sup>viva</sup> <sub>λ</sub> veluti actione (...) pulsando speciem retinendam subinde memoriae objicit, non secus atque cum mutus aliquis per signa loco verborum alicui rem quandam indicare & declarare studet. (Tom.II,1b; p.49)

artificial memory's retention derives from the assiduous motion of the fantasy, imprinting vain and fictive ideas and images in the form of truth on the unguentbox of memory (...) because of the nearness of the motion of the imagination to the cell of memory (...) it strikes memory as it were continuously and with living motion, and so pushing it it presents to the memory the living form to be retained, even as a mute makes an effort to point out and declare a thing to another person through the use of signs instead of words.

Then once more there is a split, a subdivision of artificial memory into the ars rotunda (round art) and the ars quadrata (square art), the latter of which (Fludd explains) is more convenient for common use:

conclavis aut cubiculi quadrati species facilius imprimuntur hominum literatum ignarum conceptui, quam idaeae sola contemplatione consideratae: Atque hinc sit, ut ars ista quadrata a majori hominum parte preeferatur arti rotundae: (ibid., p.51)

the forms of an apartment or square room are more easily imposed on the minds of men ignorant of letters than the ideas considered by contemplation alone.

And this is why the ars quadrata is, by the majority of people, preferred to the ars rotunda

As transpires furtheron, this square art, based on realistic and familiar forms, is usually to be preferred because, unlike it:

Locus communis artis rotundae est pars mundi aetherea, (ibid., p.54)

The commonplace of the ars rotunda is a part of the ethereal world

The difference between the two artes is that they work through different structures. In order to memorize, the subject has to elect a memory structure first, and the more familiar this structure is to the mind, the easier it will later be to 'move' through it in search of the stored material. In Umberto Eco's recent novel The Name of the Rose a secret library can be found which is very reminiscent of these memory structures. Eco's, though, is an embodiment of a round memory palace, where books are ordered (and therefore traceable) according to a complicated system based on the form of the world. The great advantage (according to Fludd) for an ordinary user, of a 'room' or 'building' is that one is familiar with them while there are relatively few people who can claim such an intimacy with the ethereal world:

quo propinquius & magis immediate procedit imaginationis similitudo a realitate sensus, eo sit in hac arte certior, validior, durabilior & efficacior. (ibid., p.52)

the closer and the more immediately the similitude of the

imagination proceeds from the reality of the senses, the more certain, valid, durable and efficacious it is this art.

But, Frances Yates suggests, the use of the round art may also have been limited because it possibly enlisted forbidden occult powers.

The idea behind the art is, basically, that the general structure of, say, the room is used to 'attach' the various items to be memorized, and later, to elicit them. Thus the order in which the room is arranged must be predetermined for the memory material to be stored in the desired way. The direction the mind takes, for instance, upon entering the room to start its work of retrieval, may be fixed from east to west in analogy with the movement of the sun. Not only are the size and proportions of the room determined, but so are its windows, pillars and even the colours of its walls. Each place is as distinctive and as memorable as possible, providing 'pegs' for the safe deposit of a great many items.

At the same time, the material to be retained is itself encoded before being stacked away. The principle is always that of a maximum of linguistic information translated (in rebus manner) into visual input. Fludd offers quite detailed information about this in a number of lists of symbols representing the letters of the Latin alphabet. Even grammatical function can be indicated. An alternative approach is to 'decorate' the room with well-known histories: the memory material gets fixed onto the various parts of that story so that when the need arises, the easy recollection of the famous story will elicit that of the less famous one.

It is clear how closely linked the mnemonic art is with the operations of the imagination. Without the latter the art would be impossible, for it would lose the faculty of transforming linguistic into visual information, and, more crucially, that of erecting an interior edifice available to the mind irrespective of external circumstance. Yet the imagination is a precarious force. It is wilful and deceptive on occasions, not always taking its (strictly) subordinate nature quite seriously. The imagination makes contact with the realm of spirit -good

as well as evil. Yates' suspicions about magical undertones in Fludd's mnemonic model (called the Theatrum Orbi (Theatre of the World)) are hence not unfounded though this possibility is not as dramatic as she suggests, since mnemonics, by definition, had always been an art that manipulated and manoeuvred between the ethereal and the earthly.<sup>22</sup>

More remarkable is another consideration: if, according to Fludd's -and others'- system, a considerable amount of energy had to be spent in mentally 'designing' the memory room, palace or theatre; if, also, the business of the initial encoding of the material was as elaborate a matter as the alphabetical lists in the UCH suggest, then one wonders (with Yates) about the effectiveness of the system. The structure itself, once erected and 'hung' with its load must have been so unwieldy that the grasping of that complex image would in turn require another mnemonic structure to memorize it.

It is impossible to know exactly how often these techniques were used and to what degree they worked. It may be, for instance, that simplified versions of the ideal model were practical. Considering his encyclopedic thoroughness and his inclination to fill things to the brim, Fludd's model may have been some kind of amplification. Bacon, in any case, thought mnemonics passé. The principle was too mechanical: 'Emblem reduceth conceits intellectual to images sensible'; he equalled this technique to the trickery of 'tumblers, funambuloes, baladines' and did not think it 'dexterous' to 'the serious use of business and occasions'.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, despite Bacon's accusation of 'reduction' the relations between what he called 'conceits intellectual' and 'images sensible' are not so transparent as this would suggest. Fludd indeed advocates caution in his memory treatise:

Verum enimvero convenit arti in omnibus suis actionibus semper  
imitari naturam. (ibid., p.56)

It is indeed proper for [the?] art always to imitate nature in  
all its actions.

As was the case with painting and poetry, the imag(in)ing of imitation as an aid to memory could not be assumed free of 'invention' and 'making'.

The construction of the memory model and the encoding of the input material are highly complicated activities. But though this complexity is clearly conveyed by Fludd, his treatise is not designed as a practical guide that might alleviate the complexity. This, Yates suggests, is so for mnemonic systems generally:

It is one of the many difficulties which confront the student of the history of the art of memory, that an Ars memorativa treatise (...) rarely gives any concrete application of the rules, that is to say, it rarely sets out a system of mnemonic images on their places.<sup>24</sup>

The overall impression is that the art has been described quite extensively, but that many particulars have been left to the discretion of the individual user or reader.<sup>25</sup> Thus the ars rotunda is not much more than mentioned here and there, and the ars quadrata prescribes 'some famous history' to be put above each door in the house but only very loosely suggests possibilities.

The ars rotunda might, as Yates believed, have involved magic. But if this was so, the risk of making this public may primarily have lain in the way magic involved the powers of the imagination that exceeded mere reduplication. Its danger lay precisely in the areas where the imagination departed from its ideal of straightforward imitation. Murrin notes the connection between memory and making; in this case, literally, poetry:

The specific techniques by which the poet affected the memories of his audience were themselves invented by a poet; for the art of memory, as begun by Simonides and elaborated by the classical rhetoricians, merely consisted in a kind of unspoken allegory.<sup>26</sup>

The inexplicitness and incompleteness of Fludd's memory treatise, its obscurities and omissions, therefore, may be understood as the necessary result of Fludd's own conception of the memory which so deeply involved the problematic notion of the imagination. Fludd's faculty of the memory mirrors but only with the omissions and additions, the inexact translations that characterize the consignment of the memory material to its safe mnemonic home.

Section four

The subject of signs, no less than those of the imagination and of memory, is implicated in the problematics of reflection. The prominence and primacy of (linguistic) signs in reflective cosmogonies like those of Fludd is great. They appear, immediately following a description of creation in terms of emanation that derive from Plato, in this set of quotations:

unus, itemque & alter dicitur ad imaginem Dei creatus, quatenus exemplar emanationum idaeae supersubstantialis pro anima sua & forma sive actu primo habent. (Tom.II,2; p.142)

the [world] as well as [man] is said to be created in the image of God insofar as they have the form of the emanation of the supersubstantial ideas for their soul and shape or as a first act.

And semantic theory in a nutshell has its origins in the Cabala:

Hinc, inquam, Sephiroth, sive numerationes divinae sunt in mundo; indeque etiam reperiuntur in spirito humano; non aliter, quam imago splendidissima in speculo politissimo, (ibid.)

Hence, I say, the Sephiroth, or divine numerations, are found in the world; and hence they are found in the human spirit; just as a most brilliant image in a highly polished mirror.

Fludd here uses a theory of inscriptions in which eternal forms (called Sephiroth by the Cabalists, Ideas by the Platonists) become manifest as material imprints. The Christian Cabalist had a standard myth about the origin of these stamps which Fludd recorded:

Concludimus igitur, non modo verisimile sed certissimum esse, quod quaelibet dictorum elementorum sanctorum effigies particularis speciale aliquod creationis opus importet: Atque hoc eo evidenter declaratur, quoniam Deus singulas suas in creatione actiones cum demonstratione seu particula *AN* Eth conclusit; quippe quae sumitur pro signo, figura, charactere, litera, aut forma;  
(Tom.II,2; p.3-4)

We conclude therefore that it is not only truthlike but most certain that a form [an image] of the spoken holy elements causes some special work of creation. And this is more evidently declared by the fact that God concluded each action in creation with the demonstrative or particle **וְ** Eth. Which indeed is taken for sign, figure, character, letter or form;

Thus Fludd proceeds to read the first lines of Genesis:

Bara, Elohim (Eth) hashamaym, Deus creavit figuram, signum, characterum aut literam coelorum, &c. (ibid.)

Bara, Elohim (Eth) hashamaym, God created the figure, sign, character or letter of the heavens, etc.

In the first chapter of Genesis the priority of the oral and aural over the visual is evident: this is what Derrida calls Judaeo-Christian phono (or logo)-centricity. First God speaks then he sees that 'it was good'. Contemporary literary critics like MacCaffrey base their argument in that traditional predilection for the spoken word when she points out that it is through the voice, the oral/aural medium that true revelation must happen.<sup>27</sup> From this quotation of Fludd's words it may be seen how he and other Christian Cabalists often made a point of describing movements from God to his creation by the change from an oral/aural metaphor to a visual or textual one. It denotes an elementary difference between the divine and the worldly, a difference which, as the following quotations illustrate, remains at the focus of Fludd's attention because of the literary, textual character of revealed truths. These truths are represented in signs. And for Fludd even the first divine words as they reach man belong to the mediate, material world. In that sense (with reference to MacCaffrey's distinction) even those spoken words are already somehow written:

Quod autem ad divinam elecutionem [sic] attinet, sciendum est, Deum non loqui sicuti loquitur homo, sed tanquam invisibilem Deum & Spiritum, ita videlicet, ut verbum quidem audiamus, essentiam vero non valeamus videre; (Tom.II,1b; p.15)

Concerning divine speech it should be known that God does not speak

like man, but like an invisible God or spirit, so that we hear the word yet do not see the being;

Divine speech literally co-responds, its communication is lucid and transparent. But it is crucially different too. Different, that is, by any human standards:

Non est ille sicut homo formatus capite, auribus, oculis, naso, ore, aliisve membris, sed tanquam invisibilis Spiritus, quem nemo unquam vidit, & cui similis nemo existit.

Quo circa etiam non loquitur ille sicut homo, Angelialisve spiritus, sed modo sacrosancto, tanquam purus & solus Deus. Sermo ejus est voluntas ejus: sunt Angeli in virtute verbi ejus; loquitur sicut fulgur & tonitru, sicut ignis & coruscatio: (ibid.)

He is not formed like man, with a head, ears, eyes, nose, mouth and other members, but like an invisible spirit whom none ~~has ever seen~~ and whose like ~~has never existed~~. And therefore he speaks not like men or angelical spirits but in a sacrosanct manner, like a pure and only God. His speech is his will. There are angels in the excellence of his words. He speaks like thunder and lightning, like fire and flashing.

God's speech is like thunder and lightning. Natural phenomena and worldly things convey this speech 'as in a mirror'. The whole of creation is one great metaphor of God. He created everything by his words, preceded always by וְ (Eth), the Hebrew particle which signifies nothing but the syntactical status of the word it precedes, the object of the sentence. There is no trace of a family relation between the particle and the usual Hebrew for sign, character, letter (וְ or Oth;) as Fludd and others suggest. Consultation with Hebraists always yielded the same answer: that this could only be a 'cabalist trick'. Yet even without the proven link, the attraction for Christian Cabalists of this syntactical structure is clear enough. It is the small addition, semantically negligible, of the object signal which for them symbolized the transition from holy to secular, the creation of an exterior, of a world as object. וְ (Eth) is the subtle insertion of difference into what otherwise is 'the same'; it describes the world, not as immediately given or present but as implicated in a linguistic network.

In such a 'written' world everything manifest could be consulted as signs for divine information:

Tali enim respectu adduxit Deus ad Adam omnes bestias terrae,  
atque omnia volatilia coeli ut daret iis nomina ipsorum naturis  
convenientia, hoc est, ut cuilibet nomini characteres assignaret,  
quae optime vitae illorum in calido & humido proportionem, hoc  
est, eorum naturam internam literis formalibus & essentialibus  
declararent, & corporis in elementari compositionis mole mensuram  
ac numerum, literis magis materialibus & opacis explicarent:  
(Tom.II,2- p,86)

With this consideration, God brought all the beasts of the earth, and all the birds of the sky to Adam, so that he would give them names suiting their own natures, that is, so that he would assign characters to each name which would best declare the proportion of their lives in warmth and humidity, that is, declare their internal nature with formal and essential letters, and which would with bodies composed of the elements express the great capacity and number, with letters that are more material and opaque:

The mirrors of geomancy and astrological charts help to resolve the theft of a purse or to choose a marriage partner. The a posteriori behaviour of some air caught in a vessel tells about the a priori relations between elemental forces. And the holy Hebrew characters reveal, 'as it were in a mirror'. Yet none of this is figured forth so transparently as not to leave behind the material traces of the manner in which it was achieved, the extra of the Eth. Charts have to be drawn, experiments set up, some rudimentary Hebrew learnt. If the mirror can swallow its object, can it also, finally, consume itself? This, it would seem after all, is impossible. Both the imagination and the memory system gain inevitable solidity in their approach to truth. The change of modality -from phenomenon to mirrored idea, from mere words to memory palace- cannot take place by the rules of similarity alone, but leaves a residue of difference. Fludd's use of the Eth-Oth device not only highlights the significance of the transition from immediate divine speech to the written language of the world, but also illuminates the adjective 'refractory', which is often employed to describe the lapsed condition of

creation. But refraction, literally, is the distortion of light or sound as it passes from one medium to another. The fraction or breaking involved in creation is necessary and not merely negative, as the adjective would suggest. It also implies the positive aspects of difference and plurality which (the next chapter shows) are bound up in the problematic of the mirror.

Chapter six Paradise Lost and the Mirror

It is the common wonder of all men, how among so many millions of faces, there should be none alike; Now contrary, I wonder as much how there should be any; he that shall consider how many thousand severall words have beeene carelesly and without study composed out of 24. Letters; withal how many hundred lines there are to be drawn in the fabrick of one man; shall easily finde that this variety is necessary: And it will bee very hard that they shall so concur as to make one portract like another. Let a Painter carelesly limbe out a Million of faces, and you shall finde them all different, yea let him have his copy before him, yet after all his art there will remaine a sensible distinction; for the patterne or example of every thing is the perfectest in that kind, whereof wee still come short, though wee transcend or goe beyond it, because herein it is wide and agrees not in all points unto its Copy. Nor doth the similitude of creatures disparage the variety of nature, nor any way confound the the workes of God. For even in things alike, there is diversitie, and those that doe seeme to accord doe manifestly disagree. And thus is Man like God, for in the same things that wee resemble him, wee are utterly different from him. There was never any thing so like another, as in all points to concurre, there will ever some reserved difference slip in, to prevent the Identity, without which, two severall things would not be alike, but the same, which is impossible.

Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici.<sup>1</sup>

Section one

The allegorist's ruthless search for signs and meanings through readings of the Scripture, the skies, the human body and grains of sand alike, was anathema to Milton. These were the symptoms of religious and intellectual immodesty and also indications of a striking absence of linguistic awareness and refinement. Evidence of his attitude can be found in both Paradise Lost and the Christian Doctrine. But Milton also joined in a discourse that embraced those same questions of 'mirroring' which

inspired the allegorist's work. Principles of plurality, in the form of repetitions and shifts of terms, similar to those that structure the esoteric (or allegorical) texts are at work in one of the most central passages of Milton's poem. The presence in Paradise Lost of the attendant concept of difference, moreover, can be seen in Adam and Eve's communications before and after the fall; in the kinds of speech used by God, angel and poet, and in the relation between God and his Son, the Word. In all these instances speech or linguistic reflection/representation is somehow conceived of as an imperfect mirror which, like any other earthly looking glass, can only re-present correctly while giving due notice of its divergence from its source. That divergence finds its most direct expression in the diversity -the repetition and plurality- of the poetry dedicated to the process of creation.

The fraught mutuality between God and man is at the root of the problems Milton faces in writing the Christian Doctrine. After all, this is his own attempt to comprehend divinity:

It is safest for us to form an image of God in our minds which corresponds to his representation and description of himself in the sacred writings. Admittedly, God is always described or outlined not as he really is, but in such a way as will make him conceivable to us. Nevertheless, we ought to form just such a mental image of him as he, in bringing himself within the limits of our understanding, wishes us to form. Indeed he has brought himself down to our level expressly to prevent our being carried beyond the reach of human comprehension, and outside the written authority of Scripture, into vague subtleties of speculation.<sup>2</sup>

The unfavourable undertone is clearly audible, indicting, together with the extravagances of Scholastic speculation, the kind of practices held in honour by the occultists and allegorists: 'vague subtleties of speculation' and 'being carried beyond the reach of human comprehension'. The Christian Doctrine, Milton's personal effort to negotiate human language and understanding with divine truth, is clear about this from the outset. Even in its prefatory epistle the Christian Doctrine already

firmly restricts its view to 'religion (...) [in] its pure original state':<sup>3</sup>

Most authors who have dealt with this subject (...) have been in the habit of filling their pages almost entirely with expositions of their own ideas (...). I, on the other hand, have striven to cram my pages even to overflowing, with quotations drawn from all parts of the Bible and to leave as little space as possible for my own words, even when they arise from the putting together of actual scriptural texts.<sup>4</sup>

Yet claims about origins and originality are not without their snares, despite Milton's own words and Conklin's . . . attempt to place the poet with a humanist tradition (originating with Erasmus) of 'grammatical exegetes' whose modus operandi was, ideally, the exposition of accurate and literal meaning.<sup>5</sup> Scholars have pointed out the unacknowledged presence of scriptural commentators like William Ames or the Jewish oral exegesis of the Bible, Midrash Rabbah in both the Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost.<sup>6</sup> Inevitably an argument like Conklin's suffers from the strain of having to ascribe far too much to Milton's 'originality'.<sup>7</sup>

More than that, Milton's own words, at the beginning of the Christian Doctrine, already evince the problems inherent in his approach. Another look at the above quoted passage reveals an unobtrusive shift in the language at a significant place. Milton starts defending the sufficiency of Scripture by pointing out that God himself thought it right to serve mankind with such an image of his being:

It is safest for us to form an image of God in our minds which corresponds to his representation and description of himself in the sacred writings. (emphasis added)<sup>8</sup>

It is crucial that the Bible should be the 'representation and description of himself' by himself, for only thus the text can be assumed an 'original'. This original status sanctions Milton's words and also distinguishes him from those commentators who rely on their own and others' (secondhand) interpretations and expressions. But this line of thought is abandoned in the ensuing lines. The language of the next sentence subverts the meaning of the previous words due to a slight turn

in the grammar. God is not anymore subject as well as object of his own description, but only its object:

Admittedly, God is always described or outlined <sup>9</sup>

The text for a moment loses its balance only to pick it up soon after in the more reassuring reflexive mode employed hitherto:

Nevertheless we ought to form just such a mental image of him as he, in bringing himself to the limits of our understanding, wishes us to form. Indeed he has brought himself down <sup>10</sup>

The Latin in which Milton wrote the Christian Doctrine carries this same wavering. The first construction is a reflexive one, 'ipse se exhibet'; the second follows as a passive 'describi (...) vel adumbrari'.<sup>11</sup> The effect of this small, single hiccup is slightly disruptive, putting into question the nature of the Father's or origin's involvement with his issue - in this case the text. Even though Milton clearly does regard God as the author of those 'descriptions', already the difficulties of language, divine and human, have erupted. If God writes (about) himself in Scripture, he does not convey his being immediately but in terms adapted and adjusted to man's limited grasp. And thus the burden of the text's origin or meaning is on man himself. The indeterminacy of the source constitutes a trial of man's spiritual and devotional stamina:

In short, God either is or is not really like he says he is. If he really is like this, why should we think otherwise? If he is not really like this, on what authority do we contradict God?<sup>12</sup>

Even if one believes, as befits a good Christian, that God 'really is like this', the word 'like', as a result of what precedes, has lost its innocence. It complicates any further reference to the origin or his authentic text as from now on such reference encapsulates the difference and gap in which that origin has come to be established.

Although Milton doubtlessly disassociates himself from the esoteric beliefs and practices of allegorists and likeminded writers, the arguments through which he does so participate in the latters' problematics and discourse. It is exactly upon such gaps and discontinuities between divine truth and wordly phenomenon as Milton

invokes to preserve the former's purity, that allegory, pointing always at something other than itself, builds. Milton, in Paradise Lost, is able (as Madsen says) to 'forgo the allegorical "veils" and literal "shells" that enclose spiritual "nutmeats" of Renaissance theory',<sup>13</sup> but the mediating word which Madsen believes to have become available to the Protestant writer with Christ's coming, and which operates with a presumably renewed immediacy, reaches this writer either by the way of inspiration (a notion difficult to understand at face value; see chapter eight), or, first begets a string of excogitations on the very nature of mediation. Cave has pointed out how the Protestant-evangelical 'immediate' approach to the Scriptural text led, nevertheless, to 'infinite series' of so-called "authentic" (readings, or rewritings).<sup>14</sup> This is a plurality and variation typical of the occultists' texts too.

In Paradise Lost the problem of language and representation is never avoided in favour of a solution within the safe confines of an uncomplicated text. Instead that problem determines the nature and shape of the text, regularly displacing and disturbing it, as when Raphael, in the middle of the poem, unsettles its poise by confronting it with its own partiality as 'process of speech'. The poet's thoughts on this, directly and more indirectly, constitute a major theme beyond the re-presenting of the losing of paradise. The subject is announced at the first opportunity, when Milton introduces his song as 'adventurous' in specifically literary terms (I,13) since it 'pursues/Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme' (I,15-16). These words not only give the project at hand a literary turn but also make a gesture in the direction of the issue (confronted through such techniques as accommodation and simile) to which the poet will return insistently. The poem's sensitivity and many-levelled response to 'things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme', to the power and powerlessness of language or writing is undeniably central.

### Section two

In Paradise Lost man's capacity for speech and communication is affected by the fall. Never again after the fall will human beings have such untroubled social intercourse with higher spheres as the first couple enjoyed it. Adam's first reaction to Eve's confession of sin provokes not only amazement and astonishment but temporary speechlessness (IX, 890ff).

Even before they are finally barred from the divine presence in the garden, Adam and Eve become unable to address him with easy naturalness. Earlier, of course, speech came with almost wonderful facility, not unlike the way in which, when it concerns the angels,

no voice but well could join  
Melodious part, such concord is in heaven.  
(III, 370-71)

When unfallen Adam is heard speaking for the first time, his 'utterance flow(s)' (IV, 410) and the couple's famed morning hymn is sung with a similarly graceful effortlessness. Again, the word 'flowing' helps to convey the unimpeded utterance:

Their orisons, each morning duly paid  
In various style, for neither various style  
Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise  
Their maker, in fit strains pronounced or sung  
Unmeditated, such prompt eloquence  
Flowed from their lips,  
(V, 145ff)

This is truly 'innocent prayer' (V, 209), especially when compared with the other prayer in book X, when the couple beg for pardon (1089ff). While prior to the fall, praise came spontaneously and required no special ceremonial gesture in order to be fluent and eloquent, the new mode of worship is exactly opposite. It involves ritual movements (and ones of self-abasement at that) to enhance the effectiveness of the utterance, and the latter is by no means elegantly and easily expressed. The couple repair to the place where God judged them, they 'prostrate fell/Before him, reverent', and they confess. Instead of producing instant hymns all that flows now is their silent 'tears/Watering the ground' accompanied by similarly mute sighs (X, 1086ff).

The flow of communication between Adam and Eve themselves is equally disturbed after they eat from the forbidden fruit. They have sex around midday and this forces them to seek the cover of a 'shady bank' (IX, 1037), in contrast with their prelapsarian intercourse which took place in the natural discretion provided by night and their own 'shady lodge'

(IV, 720). Now, 'dewy sleep/Oppressed them', they are 'wearied' from the love making and have bad dreams only to wake up 'As from unrest' (IX, 1052). Before, on the other hand, they had been 'showered' with roses (IV, 774) and 'Lulled by nightingales' (771) and Adam, in book V, awakes refreshed, 'for his sleep/ Was airy light from pure digestion bred,/And temperate vapours bland' (4ff). Eve's aspect, however, 'With tresses discomposed, and glowing cheek,/As through unquiet rest' (V,10ff) already forewarns of the feverish embraces after the fall.

And sin corrupts and disrupts further. Soon the couple is ripe for quarrel:

but high winds worse within  
Began to rise, high passions, anger, hate,  
Mistrust, suspicion, discord, and shook sore  
Their inward state of mind,  
(IX, 1122ff)

In tune with nature which exchanges its temperate climate for an unreliable, extreme one (X, 651ff), Adam and Eve are removed from the sphere of the monad, of unity and harmony into the world of the dyad, division and discord. The core of the idea that the fall constituted a crisis of communication is already found embedded in Genesis with Adam and Eve's postlapsarian shame and their new fear of the 'Presence divine' (VIII, 314):

The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze and hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.<sup>15</sup>

The tree of Knowledge has only just proven to be the obstacle between God and man, now trees are emblems of confusion and hindrance standing between the divine presence and the guiltily embarrassed couple. But specifically, in Biblical history, the problems with language come only later with another act of presumption and pride, the attempt to build a 'tower whose top may reach to heaven' (XII, 44). Thus 'Confusion' becomes language's fixed mark and Babel the occasion of a second fall:

Once upon a time all the world spoke a single language and used the same words.<sup>16</sup>

But when God sees the tower 'which men had built', he

in derision sets  
Upon their tongues a various spirit to raze  
Quite out their native language, and instead  
To sow a jangling noise of words unknowns  
(...) and the work Confusion named. (XII, 53ff)

In Paradise Lost this confusion and its resulting ridicule are relatively late and minor concomitants of something situated at the heart of reference and communication. Babel's babble and dispersion is one repercussion of a rupture that cuts through the entire poem, with a thematic perseverance. This rupture is present, in some form, from the start.

Even if at the moment of his birth Adam is able to 'name/Whate'er I saw' (VII, 273), he still finds lacunae in his knowledge when it comes to himself: 'how/Came I thus, how here?' (VIII, 277). And in his most important intuition (since it is his first religious one) he infers a greater intellect, a greater presence than his own in a way which, again, precludes ideas of pre-lapsarian unity and unbrokenness:

Not of myself; by some greater maker then  
(VIII, 278)

This is the intuition Descartes used in his third Meditation as one proof of God's existence. Dryden's operatic Adam, heavily indebted to Milton's protagonist, voices this insight in a more philosophical language than the latter had used:

Adam. What am I? Or from whence? for that I am  
I know, because I think, but whence I came,  
Or how this frame of mine began to be,  
What other Being can disclose to me?  
(...)  
Tho' now I am, I was not always so.  
Then that from which I was, must be before  
Whom as my Spring of Being I adore.<sup>17</sup>

Such indirect awareness of a source or maker comes about through an experience of difference that naturally accompanies Adam's pristine sense of identity. Some notion of difference, here 'unlikeness', appears to be instituted at the beginning of creation and persists throughout the crises and discontinuities brought about by the various falls. The first quiver of religious feeling in Adam is indeed experienced along the via negativa.

Other readers of Paradise Lost have pointed out already that the poem's transition from unfallen to fallen world is not really unambiguously sharp. Milton shared with Aquinas (says Corcoran) 'an insistence on the essential sameness of human nature before and after the Fall'.<sup>18</sup> And Evans says that, 'The difference between unfallen and fallen man is simply the difference between a well and badly tended garden. It is a difference of degree, not of kind.'<sup>19</sup> The structure of the poem reflects this conspicuously by the fact that the first views of paradise are already preceded by a two-book narrative of angelic disjunction and exile. It has already been shown how the angels' fall could be seen as the result of Satan's misjudgment of original difference and of his false hope for equality with God: his 'violation of "degree"'.<sup>20</sup> Nothing in this corresponds with the conventional splitting between pre-and postlapsarian. There is more than one fall, and pre's and post's consequently commingle and overlap.

A principle of difference, whether it expresses itself in Adam's ontological/epistemological make up or (on another plane) in the anteriority of Satan's fall, is a major structural principle in the poem. As such, in the continuity and persistence of its formative impact, its domain extends widely and covers the realms on either side of the divide constituted by the fall. On another level, the ubiquitous involvement of difference in creation is endorsed in the Edenic scenes by the linguistic constraints which Raphael himself confesses to be bound by if he wants to 'relate/To human sense (...) invisible exploits' (V, 564). The solution is 'By likening spiritual to corporal forms' (V, 574) and Raphael makes a point of fully disclosing this rhetorical device to his audience. This gesture is repeated at the crisis of his account of the warring angels' confrontation:

both addressed for fight

Unspeakable; for who, though with the tongue  
Of angels, can relate, or to what things  
Like on earth conspicuous, that may lift  
Human imagination to such highth  
Of Godlike power:  
(VI, 296ff)

For the time being Adam does not fail to grasp. After he has listened to the account of the war in heaven, he proves his understanding by significantly using the word 'differing' to reciprocate the angel's repeated 'likening':

Great things, and full of wonder in our ears,  
Far differing from this world, thou hast revealed  
Divine interpreter,  
(VII, 70ff)

Adam's correct understanding makes him supply the implicit, missing companion of 'likening'. And by doing this he fully acknowledges his human place and predicament. But Raphael reiterates his message (a message, together with others of a similar intention, of which Adam cannot be advised enough), and again at an especially critical turn in his narration, namely when he describes God creating through the agency of the Word and the Spirit. Suitably, he then sets off his own words against exceptional ones; forced to the edge, as it were, by having now to 'measure' the Word with words:

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, 174ff)

What is important is not merely the self-reflexive rhetoric: no one would expect the narrator to underestimate the representational complications of this project. Rather, it is the prominence with which these difficulties feature so often. They cannot but extend their impact over other parts of the poem.

God, and the epic narrator too, both adjust their speech to the predicament. Thus it has been often remarked how cold and unadorned God's own idiom is. His utterance lacks figurative appeal and reminds the reader that Milton elsewhere had been adamant about its literalness: 'In short, God either is or is not,<sup>really</sup> like he says he is'. In his passages in Paradise Lost God is indeed the ultimate authority who, accordingly, speaks in a stern, legalistic vein. The context is so often one of law and justice because it is clearly on these occasions that much of the justifying in the poem is really done. Since this task of justification consists not to a small extent (as Colie writes)<sup>21</sup> of reasonably presenting the great Christian paradox of eternity and time, or of foreknowledge and free will, care is taken that God's vision absolutely anticipates and is truly foreseeing. Thus in book III God already knows that Satan will succeed on the destructive journey he has only just begun, 'For man will hearken to his glozing lies' (III, 93) and the theme of his foreknowledge returns throughout the passage (e.g. lines 78; 115ff). Next, in book V he is found dispatching Gabriel to warn and instruct man:

Lest wilfully transgressing he pretend  
Surprisal, unadmonished, unwarned  
(V, 244-45)

It is through this constant reminder that he knows, as well as through the angelic communication of these forebodings, that

the eternal Father (...) fulfilled  
All justice:  
(V, 246-47)

Nothing is allowed to surprise the Father. When the Son sacrifices himself as the redeemer of man in book III, God affects to be pleased, but not before he has hinted, anticipating the question of redemption, that he foresees whatever the Son says or does:

All thou hast spoken as my thoughts are, all  
As my eternal purpose hath decreed:  
(III, 171ff)

The poet's use of literal language in these passages is not quite unfortunate, nor is all this emphasis on the divine anticipation the unintended proof of God's despotism which defuses and brings into disrepute the poem's references to liberty. Both literal language and the notion of foreknowledge reflect, in their different ways, an undiminished adherence of the poet to a conception of the divine as beyond the immediate reach of man. For the notions of foresight and literal language accompany the famous concept of accommodation with which theologians had prevented a perhaps all too human scriptural God from undermining his own omnipotence and omnipresence. The Protestant position on Biblical interpretation was based upon 2 Corinthians 3:6, 'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life', which for Luther and Calvin imposed the reading of scripture without recourse to the old tradition of symbolic and allegorical interpretation. God had accommodated or adjusted himself to man's imperfect grasp and became manifest 'anthropomorphically': this implied that the language at the origin, even the 'literal' language the poet uses in the above passages, itself already communicates in spite of the gap. According to the theory of accommodation unmetaphorical speech is contradictorily and irrepressibly metaphorical. As Murrin remarks, 'If the Father argues in perfectly rational logic (...) it too fits a figure of accommodation'.<sup>22</sup> And in order to alert the reader that this is the nature of God's language, the references to anticipation and foreknowledge, evidence of God's extra-temporal and extra-spatial proportions, liberally intersperse the text. Even the most elevated of heavenly scenes is subjected to human logic, the logic incumbent upon those on the other side of the gap.

These strictures do not loosen their grip in those parts of the poem where the poet/narrator speaks. Even if one may assume that he is the fortunate recipient of Holy Light which enables him to speak of 'things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme', the language that characterizes his speech still betrays the less than perfect powers at his disposal. The use of simile in Paradise Lost is almost exclusively on the poet's account. Neither angels nor the first couple employ it, except on a number of rare occasions. Martz establishes a link between the 'cheerful ways of men', their love of their earthly though exiled circumstances,<sup>23</sup> and the simile. And Hartman, similarly, speaks of the rhetorical device as 'grounding the unknown in the Known'.<sup>24</sup> Yet however true Martz's

insight is about the literary richness and pleasure of the simile, the fact cannot be ignored that it also constitutes a dubious instrument. For in the vast majority of cases simile describes Satan, hell or other infernal subjects. On the whole simile seems not deemed good enough for less inauspicious purposes. As will be seen in a later chapter, the pleasure which the use of language in general does involve, is one qualified by representational complexities. This qualification transforms mere superficial wordplay into celebration or homage, man's acknowledgement of the intricacy of his relations with the divine.

The use of epic simile is called for when a statement requires the support of comparison. The figure works in terms of similarity ('as', 'like') between the thing stated and another one, in order thereby to elucidate and illustrate the former. But the comparison is of course only too liable to highlight the problem which it comes to solve: the questionable ability of word to cover thing. 'All similes are problematic (...) [they] assert difference perhaps as much as similarity' says Murrin.<sup>25</sup> Whaler also marks its use for the purpose of 'aggrandizement' or 'relief' (so as to suspend the narrative strain),<sup>26</sup> both of which effects depend on simile's implied gesture toward difference. And similarly, Janet Adelman's idea that Milton's 'use of the form of the simile emphasises the degree to which heavenly things are like themselves alone'<sup>27</sup> responds to the way simile has of undercutting its own stated promise, of portraying discursive knowledge as problematic.<sup>28</sup>

Despite their figuratively pleasing aspect, the similes in Paradise Lost are unsatisfactory in a number of ways. Not only are they used mostly by the human narrator and occur most frequently in a hellish context, but they often unsettle rather than enhance understanding. A substantial number of them, for instance, is of the negative type, using 'an unlikeness between the things compared',<sup>29</sup> so that the object is compared to something which is not nearly as bad, big, etc. Meaning, here, is created along the via negativa, 'Milton's most inspired and continuous approach to the Deity'.<sup>30</sup> Other similes juxtapose the scriptural scenes of the poem to episodes taken from Greek mythology<sup>31</sup> and little doubt is left that the poet considers the latter only very partially commensurate with his own Judaeo-Christian material. Compared to Eden, 'the fair field of Enna' or the isle of Nysa pale into insignificance (IV, 268ff). Other

similes, again, as Fish's work has shown,<sup>32</sup> are deeply ambiguous as they only ostensibly answer the objective of illumination. Here the terms of the comparison turn out to be heterogeneous or ambivalent so that the reader feels that, at least in this form, rhetoric is unequal to its task. In their different ways, 'speakers' like God and the poet have to adjust themselves to the nature of representation. Neither the former's 'literal' speech nor the latter's figurative language escape this predicament.

The poem's theological conception of hierarchy and differentiation undermines a full rhetorical rendering of the un fallen world, in and by the fallen one. The principle of difference is the condition of creation itself, and this is borne out powerfully in the Christian Doctrine, where Milton takes a heterodox, antitrinitarian position which insists on the inequality, or difference, between the Father and the Son:

but he was in a real sense the Father of the Son whom he made of his own substance. It does not follow, however, that the Son is of the same essence as the Father.<sup>33</sup>

This idea, objectionable to established religious opinion, also finds its way into the poem where the Father calls the Son 'Only begotten Son' (III, 80; V, 835); and the word 'substance' is used (III, 140) to the exclusion of 'essence', just as Milton had distinguished between them in the Christian Doctrine.<sup>34</sup>

The Son is not only God's efficient power (V, 836), he is also the latter made visible:

Son in whose face invisible is beheld  
Visibly, what by deity I am

— so that the Son is invested with a mediatorial function analogous to that of the language which the archangel Raphael later uses to make heavenly things amenable to a human audience. As Patrides has shown, the fundamental difference between manifest and hidden, worldly and heavenly, finds one of its expressions in the way the poem consistently speaks of 'God' and/or the 'Son' in its description of heavenly scenes, but stops doing so as soon as the Son descends to operate in the world. Then only the word 'God' is used.<sup>35</sup>

The question of the mediatorial role of the Son or the Word (one version of the mirror question of representation) has been given ample attention in the critical literature. Adamson has shown how a doctrinal adherence to the ex-Deo theory (which Milton espoused) and to the via negativa, also includes the notion of a mediating Logos.<sup>36</sup> Belief in both an unknowable God and a mediating Son, reminds Christopher Hill, was held not only by Milton but also by Locke and Newton:

the three greatest names of the period could not find Trinitarianism in the Bible. Newton seems to have shared Milton's view that the Son was the divine agent in the Creation, and that the Father was a Deus Absconditus.<sup>37</sup>

But the contradiction implied by this simultaneous belief in an unknowable God<sup>38</sup> and a communicating agent is unfortunately not elaborated neither by Adamson nor by Hill.

Madsen opposes such an association of Milton with a mystical/allegorical line of thought like the ex-Deo tradition with a different argument. He believes that for Protestants like Milton, the Incarnation had liberated the Word from obscurity and thus solved the difficulty of interaction between the occult and the manifest.<sup>39</sup> Allegory, language-as-a-veil (corollary of the via negativa) had been replaced by rhetoric, language-as-illumination. But the main objection to this, as concerns Paradise Lost is that its many references to language simply do not concur with the idea of language-as-illumination. The phrase 'from shadowy types to truth' (XII, 303ff) with which Madsen entitles his argument is, in Milton's Areopagitica, associated only with the future, with Christ's 'second coming'.<sup>40</sup>

And a propos the question of illumination, Adamson's work on the ex-Deo tradition has shown that for some Protestants, including Milton, the relations that ruled between light and darkness were complicated, and that light or illumination could even be imagined as veiling darkness, which here represents the divine presence itself. Pseudo-Dionysius, founding father of the ex-Deo tradition, uses this imagery: 'Unto this Darkness which is beyond Light we pray'.<sup>41</sup> The same ideas are found in Pico's On Being and the One:

Let me rise to the fourth step and unto the light of ignorance,  
and blinded by the darkness of divine splendour let me cry out with  
the prophet 'I have become weak in thy courts, O Lord! finally  
saying only this about God, that he is unintelligibly and ineffably  
above everything most perfect we can speak or conceive of him.<sup>42</sup>

And later Vaughan too employs them in his poetry:

There is in God -some say-  
A deep but dazzling darkness<sup>43</sup>

Paradise Lost takes the same course when, in one of a number of such formulations, God is likened to 'a Flaming mount, whose top/Brightness had made invisible' (V, 598-99).

Such observations go some way toward justifying Murrin's claim that Milton used a mixed mode of writing that combined allegory/prophecy and neoclassical rhetoric.<sup>44</sup> Here language as veiling and language as revealing do not exist separately. In this mode of writing, carried to an extreme by the writers of the Christian Cabalist tradition, but (as Chapter four shows) also observed in the literary criticism of the late 16th and of the 17th century, the characteristic incapacity of language to be entirely representative is reflected. And this, it would seem, is what one finds in Paradise Lost's concern to qualify and question explicit expression and assertion.

From the beginning, the Word is not equal to the Father, and correspondingly language does not simply duplicate and expose its source. Sin and the fall do not alter this, but context and proportions change. Difference, which first gave rise to Edenic variety and conjugal harmony, now leads a less irenic couple away from the safe enclosure of paradise, into a world of confusion, of violence mixed with grace. 'Unlikeness' or otherness, which makes possible the emergence of a world, acquires its less positive connotations after man's transgression. It is only after he has undergone his final lesson and received his ultimate reproach from Michael, that Adam is ironically 'satisfied' about the paradoxical nature of his, and all other creatures', bond with God. But the knowledge of this fact had already been revealed much earlier to him by Raphael, in Neoplatonic terms:

one almighty is, from whom  
All things proceed, and up to him return,  
If not depraved from good, created all  
Such to perfection, one first matter all,  
Indued with various forms, various degrees  
Of substance, and in things that live, of life;  
(V, 469ff)

Differing but in degree, of kind the same.  
(V, 490)

Since this is the state of affairs, knowledge (or speech, or writing) has to direct itself 'In contemplation of created things' (V, 511) and Raphael warns:

Meanwhile enjoy  
Your fill what happiness this happy state  
Can comprehend, incapable of more.  
(V, 503; emphasis added)

The word 'fill', through its regular appearances in the text, serves to contrast the fulness of God's creation with the necessary limitations imposed on his creatures, human as well as angelic.

Adam, unfortunately, is only able to respond to the warning seven books later, to another angel:

Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,  
Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill  
Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;  
(XII, 558ff; emphasis added)

Prelapsarian satisfaction gives way to its postlapsarian counterpart when fulfilment (of appetite) has already acquired its uncomfortable meaning. After Eden satisfaction is a questionable good in Judaeo-Christian morals.

Thematically, Paradise Lost devotes unabating attention to an intricate interplay set into motion by creation and articulated in the notions of similarity and difference and of mirror mechanics. But these matters have their impact too on structural aspects of the poem, which must now be considered.

### Section three

B.Rajan has found that in comparing the theological views of the Christian Doctrine and those of Paradise Lost, the poem (unsurprisingly) proved the less explicit. He gives some instances where, in the poem, it is left to the reader to decide exactly which particular doctrine inspired the passage.<sup>45</sup> When one takes into account the subtle shadings of seventeenth century Protestant doctrinal difference, such decisions are not easily made. And moreover Rajan shows that Milton always enables the reader to find the accepted, orthodox stance too. Rajan sees the fact that Paradise Lost is an epic poem and not a theological treatise, as an explanation of this.<sup>46</sup> This is too vague a reason to be of great use yet these various interpretive possibilities exist and give one more occasion for a heightened awareness of the complexities of representation.<sup>47</sup> The Christian Doctrine in its way starts out pressing this large question of origin and representation and it would be unwise to ignore its formative role in the remainder of that text.

G.B.Christopher, writing about the Puritan attitude to knowledge and the word, observes that Milton in book III of Paradise Lost makes God pronounce salvation history up to three times, and she comments:

The grand redundancy of Milton's God is in part a demonstration that his Word does not inhere in any particular verbal formulation<sup>48</sup>

Christopher's work focuses upon a change in conception, occurring with the Reformation, when the Logos came to be thought of as sermo (speech) rather than as verbum (reason).<sup>49</sup> Faith, hence, became a 'poetic activity' and God a '"Character" whose speech is a unity interpreted by a multiplicity of creaturely responses'.<sup>50</sup> This multiplicity the writer finds reflected in Milton's threefold presentation of salvation theory. She also locates a sanction for the simultaneous use of various texts, which she finds in Milton's own reference in Areopagitica to '[St.]Paul (...) who thought it no defilement to insert into holy Scripture the sentences of three Greek poets,'<sup>51</sup>

Such a multiplicitousness Milton had described beautifully elsewhere in his Areopagitica, which treats the demand for personal liberty mainly in terms of freedom of expression. This freedom is seriously threatened when

truth becomes a commodity 'to be monopoliz'd and traded in',<sup>52</sup> held in the sole possession of one or a few persons:

Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his Apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who as that story goes of the Aegyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewd her lovely form into a thousand peeces, and scatter'd them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the carefull search that Isis made for the mangl'd body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall doe, till her Masters second comming;<sup>53</sup>

The involvement of personal freedom and responsibility with the search for truth is so crucial and farreaching for Milton that it leads him, in the Christian Doctrine, to cast doubt even on the immaculacy of his ultimate source, the Scripture, in the defence of the truth:

We have, particularly under the Gospel, a double Scripture -he begins and proceeds to cloud over his earlier notions of the crystal-clear self-explanatory text:

There is the external scripture of the written word and the internal scripture of the Holy Spirit which he, according to God's promise, has engraved upon the hearts of believers, and which is certainly not to be neglected. (...) The pre-eminent and supreme authority, however, is the authority of the Spirit,

And this, astonishingly, is because (as now appears) the seminal text itself is not free from corruption:

the external scripture, particularly the New Testament, has often been liable to corruption, and is, in fact, corrupt.<sup>54</sup>

So even the New Testament is a 'particular verbal formulation'. As a result, there is no first, a priori, privileged utterance, fixed securely to the truth which it mirrors faithfully and unequivocally. Instead,

truth 'may have more shapes then one' and 'she may be on this side, or on the other'. What is worse, she may be pluriform and manifold, 'without being unlike herself'.<sup>55</sup> In the Areopagitica, several formulations of this idea can be found. An example is the comparison between the erection of God's house from various materials like stone, timber, etc.; and the variety of opinion that ought to be allowed in the Church:

these should be <sup>a set of</sup> irrational men who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world; neither can every peece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportionall arises the goodly and <sup>the</sup> gracefull symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure.<sup>56</sup>

The attitude resembles Augustine's at the end of his Confessions, who argues for a similar acceptance of plurality and variety under the auspices of a God generous enough to provide for a number of different truths (as Augustine calls them here), or meanings, or interpretations:

although I hear people say 'Moses meant this' or 'Moses meant that', I think it more truly religious to say 'why should he not have had both meanings in mind, if both are true? And if others see in the same words a third or a fourth, or any number of true meanings, why should we not believe that Moses saw them all? There is only one God, who caused Moses to write the Holy Scriptures in the way best suited to the minds of great numbers of men who would all see truths in them, though not the same truths in each case.<sup>57</sup>

John Webster (1610-1682), a Puritan divine who served in the Parliamentary army both as chaplain and as surgeon, tackles the same

problem in his Academiarum Examen (1653). In his attack on academic scholasticism he argues (using forms of argument reminiscent of Agrippa's in the Vanitie) against, among others, the teaching of Hebrew, as if only through a command of that tongue the original text of the Bible could be mastered:

it is not yet infallibly concluded, either which are the true original copies (...) that they have been purely and sincerely preserved unto our hands. For Languages change and alter, as fashions and garments.<sup>58</sup>

Like Milton, Webster's only alternative is 'the language of the holy Ghost'.<sup>59</sup> It is worthwhile to note that both Saurat and Parker have pointed out the likelihood of Milton's sponsorship of Walton's Polyglot Bible.

Webster has more in common with Milton. The two men were contemporaries and shared political sympathies. Webster might even have studied at Cambridge too, though official records of this have not been preserved. His Academiarum Examen was one of the progeny of Bacon's Advancement of Learning, and the latter is quoted on the titlepage and throughout the book. Its programme for educational reform is similar to that of Comenius, whose work, through Samuel Hartlib, had also reached Milton and sufficiently impressed him to design his own ideal curriculum. More precisely, the Academiarum Examen advocates the use and refinement of 'Natural Philosophy' and science 'grounded upon sensible, rational, experimental and Scripture principles'.<sup>60</sup> Webster recommends an exemplary 'Natural Philosophy':

such a compleat piece in the most particulars of all human learning (though many vainly and falsely imagine there is no such perfect work to be found) is the elaborate writings of that profoundly learned man, Dr. Fludd<sup>61</sup>

John Dee's work, too, is quoted more than once in the chapter on mathematics.<sup>62</sup>

These quotations from Milton's work as well as those from Augustine and Webster add force to Christopher's argument about 'any particular verbal formulation'. They allude to the fragmentary, disrupted, polymorphic

state of language even in its most pristine, Biblical quality. And while Patrides quotes Colet to the effect that the account of creation in Genesis is a 'high and holy fiction',<sup>63</sup> the same idea transpires from the following passages from Agrippa's Vanitie and Dryden's Religio Laici, respectively:

Finally, by the meanes of them [the grammarians] it is brought to passe that the translation of the Holy Scripture, so many times chaunged under the pretence of correction, dothe now altogether disagree from it self.<sup>64</sup>

Oh but says one, Tradition set aside  
Where can we hope for an unerring Guide  
For since th'Original Scripture has been lost,  
All Copies disagreeing, maim'd the most,  
Or Christian faith can have no certain ground  
Or Truth in Church Tradition must be found.<sup>65</sup>

Despite Conklin's argument that such challenges to the theologically important axiom of the integrity of the Old Testament did not affect Milton's Puritan adherence to the Scripture,<sup>66</sup> the poet's work reveals his preoccupation with this problem.

Inasmuch as repetition tends to draw attention to the difference between various 'versions',<sup>67</sup> its rhetorical use may very well serve such a challenging attitude towards language, while still preserving discreetly the flow and smoothness of the poetic texture. If the poet wants to stress the inherent imperfection of representation then one way of laying bare its workings is through the use of repetition. This is a possibility Murrin alludes to with regard to the rhetoric of the iconoclast (which is how he calls Milton) who 'could either multiply images or dispense with them altogether, opposite verbal techniques which have the same preventive function'.<sup>68</sup>

Thus the 'Hail, holy Light offspring of heaven first-born' passage at the beginning of book III (1-55) generates critical confusion by express strategy and not because readers have failed to find the correct interpretation so far. Fowler, in his annotation, sums up the positions taken in the 'extended controversy'<sup>69</sup> over the precise nature of the

'first-born' in his various appellations, and concludes for himself that 'it would appear that (...) M. has deliberately eschewed, as far as he can, any presumptuous commitment to particular human systems of truth'. In a later note, Fowler suggests that the alternate use of 'offspring of heaven first-born' (III, 1) and 'bright essence increase' (III, 6) (that is, the apparently simultaneous assumption of the Arian and Trinitarian positions) might be intended. This point had indeed been worked out by Saurat, who employed it to reveal a presumed familiarity between Milton and Fludd.<sup>70</sup> Such proof is outside the realm of this thesis, but the formal device itself, of composing a text that may generate more than one feasible interpretation is not unfamiliar to the maker of Paradise Lost.

Raphael, for instance, is made to employ it in book VIII when he further allays Adam's 'thirst (...) of Knowledge' (8). There, instead of answering the question about the properties and the movements of the firmament, he provides Adam with a series of possible solutions none of which he confirms as the correct one. If the reader is surprised at Adam's acquiescence after this less than satisfactory lecture (he is 'cleared of doubt' (179)), it must be pointed out that the function of Raphael's speech is to replace Adam's initial question with one of his own choice, and that this one is properly answered. 'Not only does Raphael emphasise the proper knowledge he sees contained in Adam's question, but he shows Adam the homely application of that Knowledge' (emphasis added)<sup>71</sup>, Michael North recently phrased it. From an inquiry about the heavens, the question becomes one about the safe limits of human understanding. This is what Raphael wants to teach. It is the replacement itself, together with the rather indirect but nonetheless powerful new question and its answer, that truly enhance Adam's understanding. The moral is stated in lines VIII,173-174:

be lowly wise;

Think only what concerns thee and thy being;

And Adam promptly shows that he has understood (180ff) through the word 'satisfies' which here still denotes the prelapsarian brand of voluntary and comfortable self-limitation that will change tenor with the couple's tasting of the forbidden fruit.

Yet despite the advised intellectual reserve in Raphael's speech it is not possible to read the passage as an unconditional indictment of contemporary science. For Raphael's words are inconclusive. They convey, besides the Ptolemaic view of the cosmos, the Tychonian and the Copernican, and these parade as mutually exclusive possibilities. Furthermore, these scientific alternatives are couched in a doubtful language of may's and perhaps's, and include the unsettling remark 'Not that I so affirm'. Some of the pseudo-affirmations emerge as questions: 'What if...?' (122;140). In addition, Raphael here supplies an early instance of what the late Gregory Bateson named the 'doublebind', when, in contrast with his previously quoted line 'Be lowly wise', he opens by reassuring Adam to the contrary:

To ask or search I blame thee not, for heaven  
Is as the book of God before thee set,  
Wherein to read his wondrous works, and learn  
His seasons, hours, or days, or months, or years;  
(VIII, 66 ff)

Bateson's doublebind is a two-edged message, the one negating what the other affirms.<sup>72</sup>

This variously generated indecisiveness concerning knowledge is compounded by the scornful reference to 'conjecture'. God has left his

fabric of the heavens  
(...) to their disputes, perhaps to move  
His laughter  
(Ibid. 76 ff)

Again the model of the doublebind is followed. God leaves the heavens free for contemplation, but (perhaps?) he laughs at man's inept efforts at thus finding wisdom. Laughter is not an innocent word in the poem. Earlier God has been portrayed 'Smiling' (V, 719) at the moment he acts on the angelic insurrection. The Son penetrates the nature of this smile:

Mighty Father, thou thy foes  
Justly hast in derision, and secure  
Laugh'st at their vain designs

(V, 735ff)

Laughter here is not exactly sardonic, coming from an Empsonian God, but may represent the almost mystically tranquil smile, indifferent and (or, because) foreseeing, with which many gods and saints have been visualised. It is a smile of serenity, indicating that man's actions (or those of the angels) are neither necessary to God nor harmful. This serenity embraces both the world in which man is at liberty to 'ask and search', as well as the perfect security in which God resides. In the passage, Raphael (or the poet) himself obviously delights not a little in playing around with the various theories and their jargons, as their rather detailed representations show. The pleasure of manipulating and tasting these words is not diminished by the limits he himself is in the process of imposing: Raphael's tone, says Broadbent, 'celebrates and enacts what it argues'.<sup>73</sup> Gratification might be taken to come from playfulness rather than from the attainment of conclusive knowledge. It is the gratification of exercising 'right reason', of expressing oneself and the world one lives in. Likewise there is a possibility that God also smiles at man's vain trials, conjectures and quaint opinions with amusement and pleasure. This kind of laughter recalls the irony of which Chapter eight deals: there it is argued that irony is closely attended by the positive, conscious senses of limitation and fallibility of which the laughter in Paradise Lost reminds Adam and the reader.

Scientific inquiry in the Renaissance and the 17th century was not simply and sceptically rejected, as the ideal of right reason encouraged an approach which subtly balanced the scientific with the religious.<sup>74</sup> There is no denial here of 'the need for observation and experiment but [the] chief stress [is] on the innate powers of mathematics and logic'.<sup>75</sup> Thus Webster advocates Fludd's species of whole philosophy and in the same way (but now from the reverse point of view) the Cambridge Platonists reiterate the centrality of reason in their theology. The search for knowledge is not illicit as long as it knows its beginning and end under the enigmatic smile of God. Satan's sin is to search and scheme in the hope of breaking away from that look. The knowledge at man's disposal must first of all be recognized for its difference, its limited human nature. And so it is in this passage, most noticeably because Adam's

unanswerable question itself is made to correspond with another one which he formulates after he has apparently taken to heart 'not to know at large of things remote/From use (...), but to know/That which before us lies in daily life' (VIII, 191ff). The first question had been about the seeming disproportion in the universal order (VIII, 15ff) which makes a mere 'punctual spot', 'the sedentary earth' into what appears to be the centre of 'So many nobler bodies', bodies, indeed 'nobler than herself' who still serve her. The second reformulates the incomprehensible asymmetry, which now is one, of smaller scale, concerning the human couple's personal relations (VIII, 540ff). Eve, Adam says to Raphael, of course is created to be his inferior 'in the mind/And inward faculties', yet 'so absolute she seems' that she can nevertheless easily impose her will on his:

All higher Knowledge in her presence falls  
Degraded, wisdom in discourse with her  
Looses discountenanced, and like folly shows;  
Authority and reason on her wait  
(VIII, 551ff)

The pattern of the earlier question is repeated (and thus underscored) with considerable structural and thematic precision. The mythical analogy between earth and woman is employed, and the idea of misplaced subservience operates centrally and analogously in both questions. Both questions, as their respective answers show, derive from a similar misperception on Adam's part, with the last one receiving the clear cut moralistic answer. Significantly that reply also results (like the first one) in the advocation of 'self-esteem founded on just and right', self Knowledge. Ultimately the two passages convey a concept of difference between the security and unambiguousness of the monad and the groping, yet possibly productive uncertainty of its off-spring. Yet this difference is not utter foreignness: it is a continuing approach to the divinity that does not end in coincidence. Like in the play of mirrors the images somehow derive from the object, yet it can neither be found back in them in its fulness, nor can it be adequately reconstrued.

In the project of re-telling the first chapter of Genesis, par excellence, the complicated relation between image and object, word and

thing has to be faced, and Raphael rises to the occasion. The long episode in book VII, the superficially smooth texture of which proved highly eclectic, has been discussed. This eclecticism does not merely function as 'embellishment'.<sup>76</sup>

The use of such various sources as Platonism, the Bible, Hermetism as well as alchemy, can be viewed under more than the light of plenitude. Mirror principles of representation may require (the above examples show) a strategy of variation, the generating of versions, all different but sufficiently similar too, as they refer to the common source which is not manifest without distortion. At this point another observation on the creation episode is required, which bears out more fully how deeply the notion of repetition-with-difference is implicated when the story of origins is rendered.

Genesis, especially in its first and second chapters, had always been a troublesome text. The most devoted Christian or Jew could hardly ignore the fact that here, at the beginning of his task, Moses' writing had faltered. Already the first verse with its creation of heaven and earth constituted an embarrassment for those who argued, with Jewish tradition, that not one letter of the Bible was superfluous. What then about verse 10, where dry land appears as if for the first time and 'God called the dry land earth'? While it was only in the second half of the 18th century that suggestions were first made about the likelihood of a shared authorship of Genesis, the Renaissance reader was aware of the unevenness of the text.<sup>77</sup> Such structural infelicities occur throughout the Bible. Thus the reader finds Abram successfully pretending to Egypt's Pharaoh that Sarai, his wife, is really his sister. Abram profits, but Pharaoh (blameless this time) is punished for having taken a married woman into his household (Gen. 12:10-20). A number of chapters onward, exactly the same disgraceful incident happens, but now with King Abimelech of Gerar and (the meanwhile renamed) Abraham and Sarah.

Milton was confronted with an uneven text, a fact which he did not, however, gloss over. Fletcher finds him 'constantly and with remarkable consistency recognizing the need for accepting the various duplicate accounts of Biblical events'.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, for Broadbent, his rendering is 'highly eclectic'<sup>79</sup> while it, simultaneously, conforms quite closely to

the first 26 lines of Genesis. Attention has already been paid to the use of 'foreign' elements within the passage (244ff); in addition, the lines running from 215-243 constitute themselves an elaboration of the first two verses of Genesis. Thus the treatment of creation that starts in book VII from line 215, can be divided into these 30 or so lines of elaboration of quite extraneous character on the one hand, and the big remaining portion, on the other, which, structurally at least, follows Genesis rather closely.

Fletcher noticed this division, one part of which he sees as occurring at lines 244-45.<sup>80</sup> He finds precedents in the medieval rabbinical commentaries of Ben Gerson, Ibn Ezra and Rashi, which, printed in Buxtorf's Bible, might have been used by Milton. Such a division dealt with the confused aspect of Genesis I, and consisted in the representation of creation as both an act as well as a process. The rabbinical rendering of two alternative versions of creation would have been necessitated by the philosophical conception of a God creating beyond time, instantaneously, and (on the other hand) by the temporal nature of the Scriptural account of the six days' work. This same division of creation as an act beyond time as well as a process in time is mentioned as an early Christian tradition by Patrides who, however, does not observe its traces in Paradise Lost.<sup>81</sup>

Williams, in his survey of 16th and 17th century hexameral commentaries, mentions a traditional way of coping with such textual problems.<sup>82</sup> He spots it in (for instance) Donne's Sermons (XCV)<sup>83</sup> and in the popular hexameral commentary of Pererius. This method of re-ordering Genesis consisted in a tri-partite division of the hexameron. Such a division between creation, distinction and ornamentation is analogous to the three first parts of the Ciceronian rhetoric: invention, arrangement and style. God, in these cases, is portrayed in his logocentric quality of the Divine Rhetorician or Poet, a common image in the Renaissance. In Williams' hexameral commentaries the first stage of this rhetorical creation is the creation of unformed matter; this is followed by the work of distinction when basic matter assumes its several forms and these are allocated to their several places; finally there is ornamentation, when the heavens are furnished with planets, the earth is covered with plants, populated with animals and ultimately inhabited by man and woman.

Vestiges of such an effort at reforming the original fragmentary account might also be perceived in Paradise Lost, according to Williams. First, lines 216-233 describe the delimitation and creation of 'matter unformed':

Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace,  
Said then the omnific Word, your discord end:  
Nor stayed, but on the wings of cherubim  
Uplifted, in paternal glory rode  
220 Far into chaos, and the world unborn;  
For chaos heard his voice; him all his train  
Followed in bright procession to behold  
Creation, and the wonders of his might.  
Then stayed the fervid wheels, and in his hand  
225 He took the golden compasses, prepared  
In God's eternal store, to circumscribe  
This universe, and all created things:  
One foot he centred, and the other turned  
Round through the vast profundity obscure,  
230 And said, Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,  
This be thy just circumference, O world.  
Thus God the heaven created, thus the earth,  
Matter unformed and void:

Next, lines 233-243 treat 'distinction' through its traditional theme of the brooding bird, the subsequent separation of things, and their relegation to 'several place':

darkness profound  
Covered the abyss; but on the watery calm  
235 His brooding wings the spirit of God outspread,  
And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth  
Throughout the fluid mass, but downward purged  
The black tartareous cold infernal dregs  
Adverse to life: then founded, the conglobed  
240 Like things to like, the rest to several place  
Disparted, and between spun out the air.  
And earth self balanced on her centre hung.

Ornamentation, too, the last rhetorical category, can be found back in the remainder of the passage, with its use of catalogues to enrich the description of events.

If the traditional rhetorical division is detectable in this long passage it is only in the form of traces. Milton's method obviously diverges from it, as he apparently does not intend the first 27 lines (215-243) to represent the first two days' events, which would have been the case were he to have followed the model. Line 243, instead of picking up the sequence at the third day with something like 'Let the waters under heaven be gathered' (Gen.1:9), begins with the beginning, 'let there be light'.

But to compound the matter, the difficult 27 lines leading up to the account of creation suggest another reading, no less partially articulated and submerged than the previous one. Here a different, but roughly parallel division is signalled in changes of agent which occur in the text up to line 243. First, the Son silences chaos and delimits the universe; next, the spirit of God broods, infuses, engenders and 'conglobed/Like things to like'; and finally God whose word takes immediate effect, speaks in order to make.

Corresponding to these divisions are certain changes of conceptual terms, too. Initially, creation is conceived in imagery associated not only with predictably orthodox material from Psalms, Proverbs, Job and Ezekiel, but also with the Platonic and Pythagorean notions of a holy Geometer and Architect who disposes the world mathematically.<sup>82</sup> Next, after the first movements of delimitation and arrangement, the spirit or wind over Genesis' waters is amplified in Neoplatonic terms, and especially with those associated with a Hermetic-alchemical process of separation and its characteristic forces of sympathy and antipathy. When finally line 243 is reached and God becomes the subject of the action, the text follows the Bible more closely, though it never altogether excludes heterogeneous material.

Of course, the passage moving from the Son, via the Spirit to God can be read sequentially. Then the descent of the action from heaven to the lowest earthly regions is met by a similar movement in hierarchy from the upper air, where the Son is still distinguishable from God as his

effectual power, to down below where only one, all-including agent may be conceived.<sup>85</sup> Yet (simultaneously), the use of different terms together with the fact that yet another line division (not quite Williams', and apparently lacking traditional antecedents) can also be detected, encourages a discontinuous reading. For it is possible, more or less in correspondence with the changes of agents and conceptual vocabulary, to discern two interruptions in the 27 line passage. The first of these points occurs at line 232. Job XXXVIII has been adjusted to "Thus far..." and the Son or Holy Geometer has completed his task. Line 233 now starts, if the text is read sequentially, on the following action: that of the spirit. But before that there is a transition. Circumscription has occurred, 'Thus God the heaven created, thus the earth', and now the Spirit starts brooding over the primal matter. In fact, the line 'Thus...', read as if following upon a period (referring back to connect, and summing up previous events) leaves room for a different reading. 'Thus God the heaven created, thus the earth' could constitute a new start and point ahead. First the Son circumscribes in Platonic and Pythagorean terms. Now, through a different grid of terms comes another way of speaking about creation: the Spirit brooding in Hermetic-alchemical language.

The plausibility of such a reading would be slight were it not for a very similar turn appearing once more and in an equally significant position. Sustained by the next change of agent and the movement to Genesis, at line 243 a period again appears: '...self balanced on her centre hung.' This, as before, is followed by a line which can be read both to connect backward and to represent a rupture indicating the changing discourse of another version. Naturally (and perhaps unfortunately, Barthes argues<sup>86</sup>) one's inclination when not urged to do otherwise, is to read in a linear way. This has the effect, here, that each period-governed episode presents itself as in causal/temporal relation with the preceding or next period-governed episode. Infusion, separation and placement have happened, the earth hangs 'on' her centre. Then God says 'Let there be light'. But what of the various notions that enter lines 215-243 as preparations leading up to 'Let there be light', yet do not feature in Genesis 1:1-2? Only some of them can be found there, anticipating its 'Let there be light'. These lines had proved sufficiently problematic for

generations of exegetes to puzzle over anticipation and repetition: together with the changes of agents and terms, and finally these two ruptures, the text is ambiguous and leaves the reader with less than a sense of easy narrative continuity.

'Let there be light' in line 243, like 'Thus God the heavens created, thus the earth' suggests, however vaguely, that at these points new, different movements are initiated, small episodes which might be read as more or less self-contained, with their own agents and their own terminology. In this case each such entity would present the reader with an alternative version of the creation, one predominantly Platonic-Pythagorean, one Hermetic-alchemical and to conclude with more splendour, attention and length, the Judaeo-Christian one. Though this reading is not self-evident, its 'continuous', conventional counterpart does burden the reader with some 30 lines which are difficult to place in a more literal adaptation of Genesis and other Biblical material. The geometer, the alchemical process, the Hermetic sympathy, all rather liberally expand on the void, darkness and wind to which Genesis is restricted. The submerged traces of a rhetorical division à la Williams as well as the bi-partite one Fletcher suggests, together with the present, discontinuous reading (which would find a precedent of sorts in the three-fold repetition Christopher pointed out) would serve to gently derange the reader's tendency to accept any account of the creation too literally and too easily. Ch.J.Shirley also finds that Paradise Lost, 'particularly that section that narrates the creation, may (...) be examined as a poem whose author, aware of the difficulty of presenting spiritual ideas, attempts in various ways to solve this problem'<sup>87</sup>, but these 'various ways', for Shirley, amount to four types of accommodation which he thinks Milton uses in an otherwise regular hexameral narration.

It seems only natural for the poet to be especially alert to problems of representation when he re-presents this particular story. And as has been the case elsewhere, this consciousness is expressed with cautious subversion, leaving the reader free to meet the issue or to read over it.

Literary/textual concomitants of mirror mechanics, such as were seen to manifest themselves in the work of Fludd and other writers of a less mystical bent, also occur in Milton's poem. The frequency with which they

do so and the centrality of the issues to which they are attached (for instance the various kinds of speech, the relation of Genesis) evince the importance of the mirror complex for the poet. This would not justify his assumption into a tradition of allegorical writing. But inasmuch as a language that always expresses in relation to the transcendent, and that crucially derives its shape from this relation, determines the nature of the allegorist's work as well as that of Milton, the latter participates in some important aspects of the former's thought. Shared attitudes to difference, repetition and representation have been shown to be at work as regards the subject of the human and worldly with its inherent limitations. Yet (the chapters on plenitude argued) the created world (and at its summit, mankind) stands by no means only for such limitation. For although the text of (for instance) a poem or even a manual on the occult arts, cannot but perpetuate these senses of limitation and immanence (if only by virtue of being texts) the texts here considered also positively assert themselves and display a genuine faith and pleasure in and with themselves as such. These are not self-effacing texts. Hence the following chapters look at notions of celebration or homage, pleasure and assertion, as pivotal in the dynamic that negotiates between divine fulness and man's less than perfect condition.

## Part III

### Chapter seven The Secretary

He that hath found some fledged bird's nest, may know  
At first sight if the bird be flown:  
But what fair well or grove he sings in now,  
That is to him unknown.

Henry Vaughan, 'They are all gone into the world of light'

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### Section one

In De Pulchritudine Simulacrum, Augustine writes about perceiving God's supreme art in the variety of things.<sup>1</sup> But Augustine only achieves such perception after nearly losing his soul from love for the materiality of those things – a story of seduction mapped out in the autobiographical Confessions. The Book of Nature, read in the right frame of mind, could manifest the abundant light of God's goodness but was equally, liable to drown man's soul in the protean stream of phenomena. The surface beckoned in its glittering variety but there was no joy or reward in its contemplation. With characteristic paradoxicality, the surface or texture was thought only to give satisfaction to those who discovered in its plurality the traces of the One and in its materiality the finer stuff of the Spirit.

Yet the biographical priority (in the real life described in the Confessions) of worldly experience is paradigmatic and attends upon the most pious of Augustinian pronouncements. Truth itself, analogous with God's goodness, is deposited or disseminated in plurality and variety, and this is not lamented but rather regarded as a tribute to divine fulness.

For Plato and Augustine and also for the writers of the Cabala, there is no resting point in the shifting aspect of things. Their abundance is infectious or poisonous, but also (sign of) the sovereign remedy. Their surface blinds yet also reveals. This ambivalence, in all its unresolved radicality, applies to other books than the Book of Nature, and

especially to the Bible. The transition from one surface to another, from nature to text is almost unmarked: the two spheres indeed interpenetrate in Luria's conception of a creation via metaphysical forces which are equally characters, the characters of the Hebrew aleph bet. According to the Cabala the entire text of the Bible (and to subtract or miss out one jot of it was desecration) is an (irretrievably) obscure and jumbled version of the longest of God's numerous names.

In this context it is the textual surface instead of the worldly one, which preserves the Divine Word or voice while distorting it. Derrida has written of this never fixed movement in connection with Plato's texts.<sup>2</sup> Plurality, diversity or abundance is always both more and less than the One with whom it is in this difficult relation. Plurality is alluring but gaudy supplement: its fate is to play other to the same. It is also insufficient substitute, the limitation in which plenitude mirrors itself. Text is always suspect (it was seen earlier) because it reflects either in excess or poorly. Its poverty, moreover, is exactly in its excess since words remain insufficient and insubstantial; empty shells proliferating away from the truth or the reality they are to figure forth.

This state of affairs becomes especially pressing in the most figurative use of language, poetry, and this can be gathered from Plato's ambivalent attitude to it. The principles governing metaphor and its extended application, allegory, exemplify the contradictory facts of reflection or reference.<sup>3</sup> Edgar Wind picked up the connection between the plurality of the poetic surface, and the 'radical mysticism of the One' such as those of Renaissance Platonism:

Poetic pluralism is the necessary corollary of the radical mysticism of the One. To Renaissance Platonists, as to Plato himself, a generous and varied use of metaphor was essential to the proper worship of the ineffable god.<sup>4</sup>

But Wind's words shed light only on the positive side of the Platonic attitude to poetry, while ignoring the other that led Augustine to a 'rhetoric of silence'.<sup>5</sup> Even despite this, however, it is clear that the Renaissance revivers of Platonism did value text and eloquence positively. The question thus presents itself of how a deeply ambivalent

view (such as for instance Plato's) of text and its plurality, which more often than not was inclined to stress its deficiency as being irredeemably ersatz, developed into a more favourable and assertive attitude.

A frequent answer to this question invokes the notion of the poet as creator or second God. This notion is found early in the Renaissance in the works of the Florentine Neoplatonists Ficino and Landino and subsequently throughout the period until the end of the 17th century. One famous formulation of it is Tasso's 'Non merita nome di Creatore si non ed il Poeta'. At the centre of the analogy lies the Greek verb poiein from which poet derives and which means making. Accordingly the Renaissance concept of poet as maker is often seen as signalling the moment when art changes status from mere craftsmanship to a new independence of invention and expression.<sup>6</sup>

Complications are, however, likely to arise from too literal a reading of the commonplace. The analogy poet/God all too easily slips into a substitution. Where first the work of the poet in some ways resembles that of the divine creator, is like it, that work now acquires an aura of its own, becomes a divine activity itself. Independence and eloquence, the latter rightly ascribed to a renewed encounter with Greek and Latin classics, hence become associated with a decrease in Christian commitment and faith. Human achievement triumphs but, so the usual account goes, religion consequently and naturally declines: the first step toward a modern worldview with no a priori obligation to or compelling relation with a divinity. It is against such an account of decreasing religious activity and feeling that Douglas Bush directs himself in The Renaissance and English Humanism.<sup>7</sup> From his extremely conservative point of view, however, he reaches very different conclusions from those arrived at here.

Even though it is historically justified to consider the period under discussion as leading to a modern age, and even though the increasing approval of the expression and assertion of human dignity in the Renaissance play an obviously crucial role in this development, the topos of the poet/creator in which these facts are epitomized has lent itself to sufficiently unsubtle uses to be reconsidered. The importance of the

inequality or difference implied in the comparison that constitutes the *topos* must be emphasised. Such a reassessment of the poet/creator *topos* and its modification must account for the simple fact that despite the initiative and growing sense of autonomy of this period, the texts (and by inference other forms of expression which cannot be considered here) it generated are largely unambivalent in their religious dedication. Christian Cabalist collections of numerous pagan and Jewish writings for the purpose of seeing these (through the employment of allegorical methods) under the great common denominator of Christian doctrine, are typical of a more widely spread (literary/textual) approach that could inspire a revised understanding of the poet/creator *topos*. The mundane, the positively human, the confidently textual denoted not primarily a process of increasing liberation or a gradual replacement of man (or poet) for God, but rather a change in the understanding of those relations. Human achievement, natural phenomena and the textual surface now were, like the pagan writings, honoured and attended to in the name of man's relation to God.

Thus a 'generous and varied use of metaphor' indeed 'became essential to the proper worship of the ineffable God'. This was the result of a conception of man and the whole of natural and phenomenal existence as so many, indeed as an abundance of, things in whose essential limitation God's uniqueness and infinity was celebrated. Rather therefore, than producing a poor mundane replica of the great maker, the poet worked with unprecedented licence within the bounds and terms of his art, since that very occupation with the worldly was an affirmation of making itself, of the principles of identity and difference which ruled the great act of creation itself and its manifold consequence.

### Section two

Today Christian Cabalists, and those magi who were most outspoken in their occultism, are no more seen as the merely over-imaginative and superstitious dabblers in the black arts for which they were once taken. Their interest in, for instance, alchemy, open though that science was to the abuse of charlatans, has been shown to constitute a significant stage in the development of chemical and physical science. But doubts and suspicions of the occultists' ideas and methods have a history as long as

that of the occult sciences themselves which reached their greatest popularity in England during the last half of the 16th and the first three quarters of the 17th centuries. During those years there was a dialogue between defenders and opposers as well as among those who belonged within either one of these groups. The debaters were often well informed and able to discuss their esoteric subjects with some refinement. Here, the works of two of them, John Webster (1610-1682) and Meric Casaubon (1599-1671) are considered because they shed light on the elusive distinctions between faith and superstition - topics through which their opinions about the nature and extent of man's access to truth, and by implication, about the nature of his own works *vis a vis* that truth, are interestingly revealed. It is hoped that the intricacies concerning the definition, in these works, of faith and superstition, belief and disbelief, forms a background against which the poetic which can be gleaned from Christian Cabalist texts, might be better understood. The implications of this juxtaposition are elaborated in section three where the notion of the secretarial text is introduced and explained.

John Webster, who championed Fludd and Dee, addressed himself to those who were inclined to favour religiously disinterested, empirical observation. Thus, the modern scholar Charles Webster has studied John Webster's proposals for educational reform, which were mentioned in the previous chapter, in the context of Bacon's work and that of the members of the early Royal Society.<sup>8</sup> Meric Casaubon, son of the famous scholar Isaac (and not a Christian Cabalist himself yet drawn into the discussion of the occultists' practices and beliefs), on the other hand, addressed himself more abstractly to the problems besetting those who tried to find a reliable way of defining faith and of separating it from superstition. He too was prompted by the likelihood that knowledge may be had without divine sanction, empirically, and so attempted to ward off this dangerous possibility.

For the student of 16th and 17th century occultism, such defences provide an excellent view of the forces which underlie the Christian Cabalist inspired text. Little time is spent with esoteric explanations of the work of creation or the preparation of medicinal potions, amulets or formulae for the drawing down of beneficial influence. Instead, questions of faith, knowledge and superstition are directly confronted.

Meric Casaubon published more than one work to which the question of faith and superstition was central. For instance, Of Credulity and Incredulity in Things Natural and Civil in 1668, and two years later Of Credulity and Incredulity in Things Divine and Spiritual. He was the son of Isaac Casaubon who had been responsible, in 1614, for exposing the Hermes Trismegistus myth, an event which itself raised questions about truth and fiction. Meric's role in the sifting of fact from fiction however was less determined and certainly less decisive than that of his father.

In 1659 Meric Casaubon undertook the publication of an obscure tract by John Dee (1527-1608), which he entitled A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed for many Yeers between Dr John Dee (A Mathematician of Great Fame in Q. Elizabeth and King James their Reignes) and Some Spirits. Considering the quality of Dee's text, and taking into account the disrepute in which he had ended his life (it was as a black magician and conjurer rather than as a gifted and widely admired mathematician that he entered history), it is not surprising that Casaubon's initiative was seen as controversial. Peter French, Dee's 20th century biographer, moreover, suggests that there were political motives behind Casaubon's publication:

Apparently most members of the government considered [Casaubon's publication] subversive: they suspected it had been produced by men loyal to the Church of England who wished to discredit those pretending 'so much to inspiration'<sup>9</sup>

In the Relation, Dee records painstakingly the 'conversations' he and his partner, the 'skryer' Edward Kelley had with angels and spirits. These conversations were quite enigmatic, for the experimenters themselves as well as for the bemused reader.<sup>10</sup> Instead of providing the eager partners with revealed knowledge, the spirits time and again came up with undecipherable numbercodes, the key for which they refused to proffer, or with highly complicated allegories the sense of which remained unclear. Dee's reputation was certainly not enhanced by the passage in which he recorded how he and Kelley submitted to a spirit's demand that they have 'our wives in such sort, as we might use them in common.'<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of his 'Preface' (which counts over fifty pages to Dee's more than five hundred), Casaubon states his intention:

the end that I propose to myself (...) is not to satisfie  
curiosity, but to do good, and promote Religion.<sup>12</sup>

His main contention turns upon the fact that 'most men are apt to believe and to be cheated'.<sup>13</sup> Belief though is a vital element in attaining true religious faith:

some there are whose brains are of a stiff and restive mould; (...) They will hardly believe any thing but what they see;

-and such people are likely candidates for atheism.

But cheating is another matter, and Dee's case is an instance of mistaken belief:

by Truth and Sincerity, intending not only r Dee's fidelity in relating what himself believed, but also the reality of the things that he speaks of, according to his relation: his only (but great and dreadful) error being, that he mistook false lying Spirits for Angels of Light, ... the Devil of Hell (as we commonly term him) for the God of Heaven. (emphasis added)<sup>14</sup>

Dee, that is, produced 'very superstitious, foolish, fabulous writing' by mistake, naively taking evil spirits for the good ones they pretended to be. The use, for Casaubon, of publishing a text like Dee's lies with the instructiveness of the error. Rather than merely discrediting its writer it proves, in this case of infernal deception, the reality of the spiritual realm,

against Atheists and such as do not believe that there be any Divels or Spirits<sup>15</sup>

With similar reasoning, Aquinas had much earlier set up a 'balanced angelology' to counteract 'general scepticism'.<sup>16</sup>

John Webster's The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft (1677) partly responds to Casaubon's 'Preface' but mainly concerns itself with showing that the great majority of supernatural phenomena such as 'a Corporeal League made betwixt the DEVIL and the WITCH' or 'Carnal Copulation'

between them, or again, alleged metamorphoses of witches into cats or dogs, can be 'utterly denied and disproved'.<sup>17</sup>

His argument (also used by Fludd against Foster), is a well known one in contemporary discussions of the occult; it rests on the assumption that since God is all in all, every phenomenon, not excepting those associated with witchcraft and magic, is only by virtue of his approval. Webster invokes the support of Augustine:

Diabolus plerumq.; vult nocere, & non potest, quia potestas ista est sub potestate: nam si tantum posset nocere Diabolus quantum vult, aliquis justorum non remaneret<sup>18</sup>

The devil usually wants to do harm but is unable to do so because his power is subject to another [power]; for if the devil were able to hurt as much as he liked none of the just would remain

Webster continues to argue, again traditionally, that both devilry and sin have nothing to do with God's action or active initiative (for this would place the believer in a dangerously un-Christian position) but that, rather, they are the result of God's forbearance:

to speak properly sin hath no efficient cause, but a deficient<sup>19</sup>

In these arguments Webster's notion of nature and natural science is closely and expressly connected with those developed by Fludd<sup>20</sup> or Agrippa.<sup>21</sup> Since God is the 'Creator, Conserver, and Orderer of Nature',<sup>22</sup> there is an essential reciprocity between the natural and the supernatural. This encourages Webster to explain many previously 'superstitious' phenomena in natural terms while at the same time preserving the right to view nature as open to astral influence.<sup>23</sup> Many occult appearances are reinterpreted through physical or natural observation and experiment, while at the same time faith in some kind of general or overall divine intervention is retained.

Casaubon is severely criticized by Webster for his unbalanced attitude in matters of faith and superstition. Beginning (Webster argues) from the conviction that every belief in supernatural phenomena resulted from 'melancholy and depraved phantasie',<sup>24</sup> a conviction for which Casaubon was accused of atheism, Casaubon subsequently tried to 'wash off' the bad impression by 'leap[ing] into the other side of the balance',<sup>25</sup> by

indiscriminately allowing for the efficacy of good as well as bad spirits. This earns him the title of 'sworn Witchmonger' in Webster's attack.<sup>26</sup>

The two texts have clearly different objectives. While Casaubon is out to persuade atheists that spiritual interactions with men have reality in order, thereby, to convert them from their materialism, Webster tries to arrive at a form of empiricism that will not exclude a belief in God's involvement with the world. Yet both men are sensitive to the division between belief and what might be called 'make-believe', as well as, implicitly, to the ultimate impossibility of such a division. While belief is good and the prerequisite for religious man facing the world, 'make-believe' is its shadow-image, and results in superstition and credulity. Often ascribed to the dangerous workings of the imagination, 'make-believe' even threatens to turn into riotous fancy, pure or mere fiction: fabrication or making. At the other extreme of the 'stiff and restive' sensibility that only believes when it sees, is the excrescent imagination, fancy or superstition.

The role of the diseased or melancholic imagination in illicit creeds and practices connected with spiritualism and sorcery is a commonplace in the literature. Both Casaubon and Webster refer to it as such:

the bodily temper of man and of his Brain it hath been sufficiently by some late book of that subject (Enthusiasm) both by reasons from Nature, and by sundry examples proved, that a very little distemper of the brain, scarce discernable unto any (...) is enough to represent Spirits, Angels, and Divils, Sights and Stories of Heaven - Hell to the Fancy: by which sober kind of Madnesse and deliration, so little understood vulgarly, many have been, and are daily deceived;<sup>27</sup>

Casaubon's 'sober kind of Madnesse & deliration' are references to the Renaissance notion of melancholy, which is treated similarly by Webster:

These are those that confidently believe that they see, do, and suffer many strange, odd, and wonderful things, which have indeed no existence at all in them, but only in their depraved fancies and are merely melancholiae figmenta<sup>28</sup>

The Janus-like nature of melancholy has been described by Panofsky and others. This doubleness makes it difficult to establish superstition as the prime effect of that very melancholic condition which, like the imagination, was after all the receptacle of good, divine inspiration as well as being the origin of the reprehensible quasi-religious emotion. D.P.Walker and Keith Thomas have both shown how, on that basis, the Renaissance psychology of faith enabled the Church to avail itself conveniently of the same spiritual principles that were behind the heterodoxy of occultism which it condemned.<sup>29</sup>

The works by Casaubon and Webster here considered cannot arrive at their definitions of superstition and credulity without somehow accomodating the fact that these also include the essentials of the definition of (good) faith. Casaubon, in his 'Preface' is compelled to allow a belief in evil spirits in order to preserve his notion of faith in general. The transcript of deceptive interactions with bad angels is used to open the eyes of Anabaptists and Aristotelians: the proof, somewhat limp, of a spiritual reality is that evil spirits can pretend to be good ones.

The connections between belief and 'make-believe', faith and superstition, are raised again in Casaubon's Of Credulity and Incredulity (1670), which evinces even more strongly how inseparable the two ideas eventually are. In this work neither of the two terms has a stable meaning. 'Credulity', for instance, is initially understood as 'bare faith',<sup>30</sup> but subsequently, in a discussion of the extent and nature of the involvement of reason in faith, it transpires that 'bare faith' is both naive, and therefore dangerous (as with the Cambridge Platonists, faith and reason are taken to reinforce one another), as well as being eminently sufficient in its virtue as divine grace.<sup>31</sup> The same doubleness applies to incredulity; inasmuch as it guards man against the excesses of the imagination or of 'make-believe' it is salutary , but, as Casaubon himself exclaims:

O Incredulity worthy to be admired beyond any witchcraft, (...) yet proceeding (certainly in men, rational, otherwise:) from the same Cause, or agent, as ordinary witchcraft doth.<sup>32</sup>

The Oxford English Dictionary records that it is exactly around the turn of the seventeenth century that the word 'credulity' stabilized its

meaning. Until then it was used to refer to both justified and unjustified belief. Vacillation between two such contradictory meanings is typical of Christian Cabalist thought. An early analogue is found in Nicholas of Cusa's notion of docta ignorantia or learned ignorance. In fact, Casaubon, possibly aware of this idea, employs its striking, paradoxical nature toward the conclusion of his book:

of that

I will end in the commendation ~~which~~ all this while I have impugned;  
and that is incredulity.<sup>33</sup>

In this manner he arrives at a definition of faith through 'faithlessness':

I shall somewhat doubt the soundness of [people's] faith (...) who have not had some ... experience of this kind of Incredulity.<sup>34</sup>

This final reversal comes about by a quick re-definition of incredulity. Where previously it referred to a lack of spiritual commitment possibly leading to atheism, its revised/reversed meaning refers to man's critical attitude toward himself rather than vis a vis the divine or spiritual. Now incredulity is predicated on the case of

a man [who] by satisfactory proofs or evidences, being fully convicted in his understanding (...) is nevertheless, not only by the greatness and the sublimity of the things themselves that are proposed; but also by the consideration of the meanness of man (...) so confounded and amazed, as that at the same time, he neither knows how to believe, nor yet can tell how to contradict.<sup>35</sup>

While in relation to God incredulity leads to atheism or faithlessness, in relation to man himself it produces the spiritual humility which is required for believing.

In his study of faith, faithlessness and superstition, of belief and 'make-believe', Casaubon concludes with a description of the one in terms of the other. The consideration of each individually has yielded no definitive issue. The impossibility of doing so is more or less admitted when this openly ambivalent description ultimately comes to serve as a

positive statement of the relation between an infinite God and limited man.

In Webster's work no such explicit investigation into the meanings of faith is carried out. Superstitions are as much as possible refuted by reference to natural knowledge, in an almost systematic way. But, as Casaubon indicated, the species of incredulity responsible for the healthy disbelief which Webster advocates, is profoundly related to the species which denies God's power altogether. So after providing the proof against a certain kind of witch, Webster hastens to qualify this in the next chapter which is significantly entitled:

The denying of such a Witch as is last described in the foregoing Chapter, doth not infer the denying of Angels and Spirits.

The relations between faith and superstition are irrepressibly unstable: if the existence of angels and spirits is not denied (a denial one consequence of which, it was seen, could be atheism), Webster, on the other hand, refuses to ground faith in such beliefs. He does not fail to add this in the second half of the chapter heading:

Apparitions no warrantable ground for a Christian to believe the Existence of Angels or Devils by, but the Word of God.<sup>36</sup>

The pattern of Webster's oscillations between superstition and true faith is clear: first he dismantles various beliefs as 'make-believe', then he ensures that this does not interfere with faith in God's omnipotence. Webster discusses the question of the workings of medicine along the same lines. Burton, in his Anatomy of Melancholy, argues that cures brought about by charms, spells and words, work only through 'a strong conceit and opinion',<sup>37</sup> and so does Webster here.<sup>38</sup> Webster, who predictably hurries to profess his belief that notwithstanding, 'the using of charms have produced strange effects', concludes:

we do not absolutely decide it neither, it is enough if we bring so much light to the matter [of occult healing] that it may be better understood, though not absolutely determined<sup>39</sup>

Neither can Burton, for that matter, offer an 'absolute' rule that would decisively cut between faith and superstition:

In a word, this is common to all superstition, there is nothing so mad and absurd, so ridiculous, impossible, incredible, which they will not believe, observe and diligently perform, as much as in them lies. (...) I know that in true religion itself many mysteries are so apprehended alone by faith, as that of the Trinity, which Turkes especially deride, Christ's incarnation, resurrection of the body at the last day, quod ideo credendum (saith Tertullian) quod incredibile (...) But he that shall read the Turks' Alcoran, the Jews' Talmud, and papists' Golden Legend, in the mean time will swear that such gross fictions, fables, vain traditions, prodigious paradoxes and ceremonies, could never proceed from any other spirit than that of the devil himself 40

It is left to the good Protestant's individual judgement or prejudice to decide that the miracles of his own creed deserve more credit than those of other religions.

The confusion surrounding such notions of faith and superstition, is the obvious result of the problematic way in which God was assumed to manifest himself. As in Burton's case, the only criterion absolute enough to decide Webster's wavering, is an ideal and immediate revelation of divine truth. For him, such a revelation would coincide with man's final penetration of all the secrets of natural wisdom, a penetration both empirical and 'infused', of the kind Webster finds in Fludd's mosaical philosophy. However, for the time being, revelation was limited and so was man's grasp of it. God's word becomes manifest in the refractory world, and man does make mistakes. Just as 'freedom of will' is responsible for man's psychological liability to misjudge, the richness and pluriformity of the world is not unequivocal and may induce faith as well as superstition, or its converse, faithlessness. The terms of creation are ambiguous. Man is presented with God's traces but he must be careful in reading them. Casaubon's work shows that even when the mind approaches things with close reference to the divine and in full faith, it still runs the risk of being deceived:

It seems that Dr Dee began to have the reputation of a Conjurer betimes (...) But I am very confident, that himself did not know or think himself so, but a zealous worshipper of God, & a free &

sincere Christian. 41

The oscillations between belief and 'make-believe' reflect a movement between God, the transcendent, on the one hand, and the immanent, manifest world on the other. While the manifest surface is both necessary supplement of and dangerous excess to the transcendent, 'make-believe' (whether it takes the form of superstition or of faithlessness) constitutes the necessary and indivisible other to the belief that underlies faith. Just as God cannot be apprehended separately from the world, which is still radically different, faith cannot exist in a mind which is not equally exposed to its shadow-side from which it is, nevertheless, very different. Man, as part of the world of creation, not only reflects these similarities and differences but is able to reflect on them. Casaubon and Webster's self-conscious men must exercise their faith by and while realizing that faith's essential involvement with the dangerous activities of speculation, empiricism and even fiction, leading all the way into its opposite, faithlessness.

### Section three

Thus 'make believe' and faithlessness must form a part of the experience of faith itself. This condition suggests parallels with Pico's and Christian Cabalism's attitude to Christianity and its Bible, their inclination to look at other, extraneous, religious texts. Again one finds the inclusion of the other, as indispensable part, somehow, of the thing itself.

Burton's words about other religions have been quoted, words which disposed of the latter's holy texts as 'grosse fictions and fables'. This is an opinion which Burton shared with many others. Sir Thomas Browne also has much to say about this subject:

the Alcoran of the Turkes (I speake without prejudice) is an ill composed Piece, containing in it vaine and ridiculous errorrs in Philosophy, <sup>impossibilities,</sup> fictions, and vanities beyond Laughter, maintained by evident and open Sophismes, the policy of Ignorance, deposition of Universities, and banishment of Learning, that hath gotten foot by armes and violence;

Nor is Sir Thomas more positive about the 'Law of Moses' (the Bible). Its longstanding changelessness is a typical form of Jewish obstinacy:

This onely is a Worke too hard for the teeth of time, and cannot perish but in the generall flames when all things shall confesse their ashes.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, needless to say, neither Burton nor Sir Thomas Browne were averse of borrowing from these 'fictions' and 'superstitions' for their own benefit.

It was Pico's discovery that in the realm of text, the Bible did not stand in isolation. Jewish as well as pagan 'fictions and fables' somehow constituted a mirror or shadow image of the Holy Book which, if correctly read, might reveal their link with the great original. Pico's famous allegorical readings in the Heptaplus view the other (*allos*) in terms of the same: they subsume heterogeneous material under the unifying presence of Scripture. This initiative results especially from a renewed contact with important, non-Christian texts, coinciding with a religious mood which sanctioned such contact as more than merely dangerous contagion. If the surface of Scripture was the abundant, pluriform and plurivalent mirror of the creator, 'other texts' in their turn could be viewed as mirroring (often confusedly) the Scripture. The Mosaical books as well as the Corpus Hermeticum and Pythagorean tracts were all shown to reflect obscurely the great Christian truths. It now became man's task to study the opaque surface or text, in order to extract from its otherness sparks of the same. Yet from the outset there was a problem.

The terms or conditions of creation do not allow man in his present state either to come face to face with unveiled truth, or to express it as such. As was seen earlier when examining Fludd's notions of creation, such immediate intimacy with the divine could only, paradoxically, be had when man, as a separate entity, disappeared in a (mystical) reunification with his source. An approach to revealed truth, must always not only be via 'grosse fictions and fables', but whatever insight it does yield is bound to remain tainted with obscurity. For man there is no way out of surface, text and pluriformity.

Obscurity of expression, of course, is a remarkable characteristic of Pico's work and that of his contemporaries and successors, but this is not accompanied by a predictably resigned or apologetic tone. Because this imperspicacity is seen as the result of man's worldly limitations, his (temporary) alienation from God, such an overtone would only be natural. Instead, one could say without exaggeration that Christian Cabalist texts are conspicuous in their positive flaunting of linguistic and literary opacity. Agrippa, in his Three Books of Occult Philosophy employs a tactics of silence with very peculiar connotations. The very verbosity of his book negates the word's usual meaning of a 'refraining from speech'. His notion of silence is a refraining from comment or judgment, a wish to let things, or rather, texts, speak for themselves. Indeed, as was already seen before, for what are ostensibly purposes of completeness, Agrippa immediately announces that much of what he has written represents not his own opinion but, more generally, what has been said about the subject:

I have writ many things rather narratively then affirmatively.<sup>43</sup>

It is left to the 'intelligent' to sift corn from chaff:

These are things, which for an Introduction into Magick we have collected out of the tradition of the ancients, and diversely compiled in this book, in short words, yet sufficient for those who are intelligent; some of these things are written in order, some things are delivered by fragments, some things are even hid, and left for the search of the intelligent. (emphasis added)<sup>44</sup>

Yet, as the quotation illustrates, Agrippa's reticence works in more than one direction; it both provides more than is necessary and leaves things 'hid'. At the end of almost six hundred pages, he can thus refer to his work as 'short'. Agrippa suggests a concept of text as occlusion, constituted either by excess ('rather narratively than affirmatively') or by lack ('in short words'). The text is presented together with a statement of this ambiguity. Its obscurity is a given expressed in terms of multiplicity: the text encloses more than the writer cares to affirm, while simultaneously it is (in part) fragmentary.

A similar technique is employed by Fludd, in his defence against Marin Mersenne, in Clavis Philosophiae (1633). The latter had adduced Isaac Casaubon's exposure of the Hermes Trismegistus myth to which Fludd has abundant and faithful recourse. This unmasking of a belief, or even faith, into 'make-believe', or superstition, does not perturb Fludd. It is as if he had never believed in a uniform, transparently true text in the first place. Isn't it enough, he asks rhetorically, if a work, even if it is mean and worthless (vili) on the whole, yields at least one truth?

Si veritas respondeat veritati. cur veritate in M. Trismegisto  
inventam repudiem? Cur illam cum veritatem in Scripturis inventam  
non conseras? Anne unquam didicit Mersennus, veritatem a suis, quia  
es loco vili erat recepta, ex pagina sacra fuisse exclusam? Nonne  
eadam semper veritas, ubicumq. etiam reperta?<sup>45</sup>

If the truth agrees [or corresponds] with the truth, why should I repudiate the truth as found in Mercurius Trismegistus? Why should I not join her with the truth found in Scripture? Or has Mersenne ever taught that a truth in itself, because it was taken from a mean place, should be excluded from the sacred page? Is not truth always the same [herself], wherever she is found?

But if this is the nature of non-Christian texts – fragmentary and obscure, revealing truths from behind a veil – a sharp distinction between such texts and the Holy Bible is sought in vain. Indeed, it is by the example of that first text that the obscurity of others is tolerated:

Nonne legem ceremonialem scimus esse symbolicam Legis Christi

repraesentationem? Quot, obsecro, parabolis & sensibus aenigmaticis involuitur verus scripturarum sensus? Ut aures habeant & sensum (ait Christus) non tamen intelligent, alloquemini eos in parabolis. Annon & Salomon parabolis & griphis sapientiae aeternae mysterium involuit atque occultavit, dixitque Sapientis esse rem celare?<sup>46</sup>

Don't we know that the ceremonial law is a symbolical representation of Christ's Law? In how many parables and enigmas, I ask, is the true sense of Scripture wrapped? I will address them in parables, said Christ, so that they may hear yet not understand. And did not Salomon too wrap and hide with parables and enigmas the mystery of eternal wisdom, and he said that wisdom must be hidden and concealed.

Following the Scriptural precedent, therefore, writers produce texts in which the hidden and the revealed stand in a certain relation. This idea occurs at the end of Jakob Boehme's voluminous Aurora where reference is made to the hidden quality of the work just completed:

Diss ist das tieff verborgen Magische Buch/ welches der Autor  
dissmahl nicht heller zu machen vermochte/ aber nun durch Gottes  
genade vermag<sup>47</sup>

This is the deeply hidden Magical Book which the author this time [presently] was unable to elucidate further, but which he is now capable of by God's mercy

Quite apart from the confusion generated by the use of 'this time' and 'now' (these lines, dated 1621, one year later than Boehme's signed conclusion, were most probably added by someone else) which point to different moments in time, the passage discloses clearly how the author is bound to make an obscure text. At least, that is, until God's mercy will allow him to write a luminous or transparent one.

The three above authors all regard obscurity as a positive quality of their texts. Even the use, in the quotation from Aurora, of the negative '[un]vermogen' (inability) is modified into 'vermogen' (ability). The positive responsibility they take vis a vis (divine) truth (it may not be divulged otherwise than in the plurality and fragmentation of surface and texture) makes them candidates for the title of secretary which suits

their authorship better than that of maker, the traditional name of the author/poet/creator.

The epithet of secretary is not very common in the Christian Cabalist literature. It is employed only by John Heydon (1629-uncertain) who was, in part, a type of the alchemist with shady motives, as portrayed in Jonson's Alchemist. Heydon indeed probably was the model for Mopus, the 'astrological physician', imposter and lecher, in John Wilson's The Cheats.<sup>48</sup> In his bill of advertisement Mopus announces that:

The choice of Heydon as the target of a satire on the malpractices of the maquis is not unjustified. The Dictionary of National Biography gives some indication of his poor reputation by citing Ashmole who called the man an ignoramus and a cheat. Moreover, according to the same source, Heydon's work was mostly pirated from writers like Sir Thomas Browne, Thomas Vaughan and Bacon. In addition, the reader who is familiar with Henry More's Conjectura Cabalistica will discover long passages of verbatim borrowing from that work in Heydon's Theomagia (1663-64).<sup>50</sup> Books like the Theomagia and, for instance, The Harmony of the World (1662) assume the form of manuals on the various branches of magic. The Theomagia is preoccupied with magic's pedestrian applications, and even in the Harmony, which gives thoroughly Cabalist doctrine on creation and spirituality, there are chapters on 'Medicines to prolong life; to preserve health, to wax young, being old (...)'.

Although they inevitably lack real interest (even the many illustrations and diagrams are visually much less striking than those in Fludd's Utriusque Cosmi Historia), Heydon's works attract attention through the very impertinence and excessiveness of their plagiarism. In the Theomagia Heydon asserts boldly:

I have a design to walk on into the Temple of Wisdome and to discover what I finde there of the Soul, of God, and his Creation. I have no guide or conductor; onely I may say th s much, that I follow no man's Path to weary my self with fruitless labour; but that I might the more freely pass and write the easie Emanations of Mine owne Minde, and not run through Wildernesses by directions, or be drawn off from what should naturally fall from my self, by prepossessing my thoughts by the fancies and inventions of others.<sup>51</sup>

- an assertion which is discredited by contrary evidence (the substantial borrowings from More) as well as by his own words in the Harmony:

I have borrowed no mans authority, but such as is eminent, and quotations I have left out purposely, because I am not controversial, it had been all one labour, to have given you both Author and place, but it would have troubled the Text, or spotted the Margin,<sup>52</sup>

The recurrent use, in both quotations, of the word labour suggests the writer's laziness, a failure to be punctilious about reference. Every writer knows that the 'labour' of providing reference is tedious. However, this particular situation is more complicated. Writing before the emergence of standard orthography and punctuation, before, that is, the uniformization of text, Heydon was not bound by set rules concerning quotation. Often, quotations were merely signalled by a smooth shift into italic print, sometimes marginal reference to 'Author & place' was omitted. This is not to say that Heydon's method was accepted practice: the majority of writers considered here did use some consistent form of quotation and reference. Of course, Christian Cabalist texts in particular, on account of their syncretistic eclecticism, would be interspersed with italics and have rather 'spotted' margins. It would

seem that Heydon had an aesthetic desire to give his texts an unbroken, unruffled aspect:

but it would have troubled the Text, or spotted the margin

This project was doomed to fail. The effort to smooth his textual surfaces was detected and considered the work of a fraud. Waite, the 19th century historiographer of 17th century occultism, has no good words for Heydon, and does not treat him with the respect he reserves for Dee or Fludd. It is as if Heydon's failure to secure a place among such writers is in a direct relation to his indifference to the fragmentariness characteristic of, and even essential to Christian Cabalist works. He came to be known as a cheat, not a thief, for it was his mistake to cover up his borrowings.

If Heydon's work provides a negative reflection on one of the most important traits of Christian Cabalists' writings, it is for another reason that his work is considered here. The notions servant of God and Secretary of Nature come directly from the title pages of his books where he repeatedly calls himself by these names. The Theomagia, for instance, has:

By John Heydon Gent. *φιλοσόφος* A servant of God and Secretary of Nature.

The second English epithet especially is unusual in the literature. An expression similar to the first is quoted by Elizabeth Holmes in her book on Henry Vaughan.<sup>53</sup> She cites a letter from Aubrey to Vaughan, in which the former says that he likes to think of himself rather as 'attending upon God' than as 'speculating'. And Pico provides an early antecedent in the Dignity of Man:

Plotinus, too, mentions it, where he shows that the magician is the minister, not the maker of nature.<sup>54</sup>

The Oxford English Dictionary has a subsection on the notion of secretary of nature which is of interest here. Its meaning, 'one acquainted with the secrets of nature' is believed to have emerged in connection with Aristotle (*γραμμάτευς τῆς φύσεως* -grammateus tes fuseos) where 'secretary' had the double connotation of one who is acquainted with secrets, and one

whose office it is to write for someone else. These two senses coexisted in the 16th and 17th centuries and the OED mentions the likelihood that they were often mixed in use. So for instance an early application of 'secretary' is to the officer who conducted the correspondence of a King, a job that must have involved a significant degree of confidentiality. In secretary of nature, however, secretary is taken by the OED in its single sense of knower of secrets, as in Gabriel Harvey's 'The soundest Philosophers in deede, and very deepest Secretaries of Nature, holde (...) another assertion.'<sup>55</sup> In addition to this, the dictionary mentions a kind of secretary entrusted with secrets not merely natural but divine: the secretary of God, whose prototype, no doubt, is the mythological figure of Toth, scribe or secretary to Osiris (and the same as the Greek Hermes Trismegistus). In this use of 'secretary', again, there is a mixture of the two senses: keeper of secrets and writer or correspondent. Toth, of course, was (among others) the god who introduced writing into the world and who presided over magic.

Heydon's epithets, bombastic though they are, lead to a knot of significances in which notions of text and secret are of prime importance. It needs no elaboration that such a complex of ideas is of interest in the study of occult Christian Cabalist texts. Such texts, as we have suggested, were produced through a peculiarly positive evaluation of obscurity, a mode of writing that oscillates between revelation and secrecy. In the notion of the secretary a similar combination of divulging or disseminating on the one hand, and of hiding, guarding and protecting on the other, is found. There is an ambivalence in the notion of the secret itself which echoes these two opposite activities of writing (or divulging) and hiding. 'Secret' signifies both the thing hidden in its unrevealed state (a kind of non-thing, signalled by its epistemological absence), as well as the thing hidden in its knowable quality. In the first case, the word occurs in lines of the kind, 'She has a terrible secret'; in the second, however, it constitutes sentences like, 'The secret of this cake is an extra pinch of salt'. The secretary is the person who writes texts that 'keep a secret'. Like the allegorist, he fashions texts that both conceal and divulge. But unlike the allegorist, the secretary does not idealize a transparent surface, a text symmetrically subservient to its meaning. This writer,

unlike God, cannot create or articulate in fulness. In this, the secretarial text conforms with Walter Benjamin's notion of Allegorie which is 'adamantly antimetaphysical, (...) has no pretensions of any natural or any stable bounds between signifier and signified.'<sup>56</sup> Such a text reveals its incompatibility with and its divergence from the hidden truth. Secrecy is permanently on and in the surface, the text always shows off its multiplicity of meaning. And it is this plurality which characterizes the secretarial revelation: 'God is a fortiori above every name -names are only diminutives in relation to him', as Cusa put it.<sup>57</sup>

This description of the secretarial writer as making or creating (a text) in limitation, as divulging in secrecy, can already be found in the early Renaissance. Ficino, who with Landino originated the traditional notion of the poet as a second God, cautiously qualifies the nature of the similarity between the divine and the human creator. The final pages of this section follow Ficino's formulations.

The poet/creator was itself a notion parasitical on a wider conception, partly of Hermetic provenance, of man being a Godly creature. In his Theologia Platonica (1469-1474?),<sup>58</sup> Ficino formulates this likeness between God and man in words reminiscent of Pico's famous passage in the Dignity of Man:

Similis ergo ferme vis hominis est naturae divinae, quandoquidem homo per seipsum, id est per suum consilium atque artem regit seipsum a corporalis naturae limitibus minime circumscripum, et singula naturae anterioris opera aemulatur.<sup>59</sup>

The power of man is therefore almost like the divine nature because, by himself, that is, through his judgment and skill, man governs himself without being in the least limited by the constraints of physical nature and he strives to imitate all the works of a more elevated nature.

This passage closely follows and comments upon one which celebrates man's creative abilities. Man's power of imitation, Ficino says there, surpasses mere slavish reproduction:

et quod mirabile est, humanae artes fabricant per seipsas quaecumque

fabricat ipsa natura, quasi non servi simus naturae, sed aemuli. Uvas ita pinxit Zeuxis, ut aves ad eas advolarent. Apelles equam ita pinxit et canem, ut praetereuntes equi hinnirent, latrarent canes. Praxiteles in quodam Indorum templo Venerem marmore adea venustam expressit, ut vix a libidinosis transeuntium conspectibus tuta et pudica servaretur. Archytas Tarentinus columbam e ligno mathematica disciplina fecit, libravit, inflavit spiritu adeo volaret. Egyptii, ut tradit Mercurius, deorum statuas construebant tales, ut loquerentur et irent. Archimedes Syracusanus aeneum caelum fecit, in quo omnes septem planetarum motus verissime conficiebantur ut in caelo, et ipsum volverbatur ut caelum. Mitto Aegyptiorum pyramides, Romanorum Graecorumque aedificia, metallorum officinas et vitri. Denique homo omnia divinae naturae opera imitatur et naturae inferioris opera perficit, corrigit et emendat.<sup>60</sup>

And admirably, the human arts themselves fabricate [make, but also make up] everything that nature has fabricated herself, as if we were not nature's slaves but rather her contenders. Zeuxis painted grapes such that they attracted the birds. Apelles painted a mare and a dog so that, when passing by, horses neighed and dogs barked. Praxiteles represented in an Indian temple a marble Venus of such beauty, that its honour was guarded only with great difficulty in seclusion from the lascivious gaze of passers-by. Archytas of Tarentum made, with the use of mathematics, a wooden dove; he balanced her, filled her with air [or spirit], and made her fly. The Egyptians, according to Hermes, construed statues of gods in such a manner that they talked and walked. Archimedes of Syracuse made a bronze heaven in which all the movements of the seven planets were made just as in the skies, and it was whirled about just like heaven itself. I don't mention the Egyptians' pyramids, the Greeks' and Romans' buildings, their metal and glass manufacture. In short, man imitates all the works of divine nature and executes, corrects and perfects the work of inferior nature.

Human art, Ficino says, can manipulate natural things and means in a way which transcends the kind of mimicry of which even some animals (the ape is a frequent example, as in Fludd's engraving on the 'Ape of Nature') are capable. John Dee follows in Ficino's footsteps:

The most excellent Painter, (who is but the propre Mechanicien & Imitator sensible, of the Zographer) hath atteined to such perfection, that Sense of Man and Beast, have iudged thinges painted, to be thinges naturall, and not artificiall: alive and not dead. This Mechanical Zographer (commonly called the Painter) is mervailous in his skill: and seemeth to have a certaine divine power: as of frendes absent, to make a frendly, present comfort: yea, and of frendes dead, to give a continuall, silent presence: not onely with us, but with our posteritie, for many Ages.

(...)

What a thing is this? thinges not yet being, he can represent so, as, at their being, the Picture shall seame (in a maner) to have Created them.<sup>41</sup>

This art can be summoned to 'imitate' 'more elevated' subjects as the unique result of man's yearning after abstract qualities (things of a superior nature) such as goodness, knowledge and perfection. Besides, there is for Ficino a necessary link between the inferior material and superior spiritual as he shows referring to Plato's Charmidas:

ita corpus totum, nisi anima bene valeat, non posse bene valere.<sup>62</sup>

this body, on the other hand, cannot be well unless the soul is in good health

Thus certain magi or doctors of the soul can bring about corporeal well-being by incantations to Apollo:

Socrates praeterea narravit vulgatum esse apud Thraces eos medicos tali quadam curatione nonnullos homines servare immortales consuevisse.<sup>63</sup>

Socrates moreover told that for the Thracians these same doctors generally had the reputation of rendering certain men immortal, thanks to this treatment.

It is also generally known that Ficino and his followers believed similar links to be involved in the method of constructing flying birds and life-like gods. His idea was that no feat of natural magic could be effected without recourse to the spiritual powers which governed every

worldly phenomenon. Thus the Greek painters' success lay in their 'magical' ability to invoke more than material resemblance. Is not the magus, according to Pico, he who joins things earthly to things divine?

But for all Ficino's trust in a god-like man, the precise possibilities of his concept of natural magic should be considered closely before looking at his equivocation between man and God. As far as the painters are concerned, their pictures animate (dogs and birds and horses) rather than being animate(d) themselves. And when the case of the Egyptian statue-gods is mentioned, this is done indirectly, 'ut tradit Mercurius'. Mention of Socrates' Thracian magi is equally cautious. Ficino speaks in terms of reputation, and later of opinion and ideas: and this reputation itself is wrapped in another indirectness: 'Socrates narravit'. In the quotation from Dee's 'Mathematicall Preface', words like 'seame' and 'in a maner' are conspicuous.

It would not do to doubt Ficino's belief in man's divine powers. But his caution reflects another of his convictions which is equally characteristic.<sup>64</sup> Like Cusa, he stresses man's incapacity to comprehend the divine fully, and man's tendency to compensate for this by the use of words which are by definition inadequate:

Cogitamus saepe purissimam quadam capacitatem, quam nulli usquam  
limites capiant, quae capiat quaecumque possunt esse vel fingi.  
Quoniam vero pura ipsa infinitas nihil aliud est quam Deus, quando  
illam cogitamus capacitem, tunc Deum ipsum excogitamus, etsi  
minus animadvertisimus. Fallit enim mox suis nos praestigiis  
phantasia, subito pro divines radiis adducens tractum aliquem  
linearum in longum, latum atque profundum, atque ita compellens  
dimensione nobis aliquam vel inane videri, quod divinum est lumen.  
Fallit nos iterum quando consideramus Deum omnia prorsus implere;  
tunc enim illa persuadet eum in rebus quodammodo collocari.<sup>65</sup>

Often we think of a very pure capacity which is nowhere enclosed by a limit and which contains everything that can exist or that can be imagined. But because the pure infinite itself is nothing but God, when we think of this capacity it is really God himself we are thinking of, even if we are unaware of this. Soon indeed fantasy abuses us with its artifice, as it suddenly poses instead of the

divine rays a sketch [outline] of lines and length, height and depth, obliging us in this way to conceive what is really the divine light, as some kind of dimension or even as a void. Fantasy deceives us again when we think that God fills absolutely everything for it persuades us that he is placed in some manner in all things.

Instead of conceiving of God abstractly, as 'pure capacity', man has to think of him in terms that must fall short of such infinite potentiality. Human concepts like those of length, height, and depth form traces which only reflect themselves. In an attempt (which is self-consciously only an attempt) to point out the inadequacy of such transpositions, Ficino uses a rhetoric of inversion:

Nec per mundum Deus, sed mundus per Deum, quatenus potest,  
extenditur.<sup>66</sup>

it is not God who extends himself throughout the universe, but rather the universe which extends itself within God, insofar as this is possible.

The same human arts which, in the earlier quotation, were praised for their nearly divine efficacy, are also seriously limited. As before, the critical role is that of the imagination or fantasy, the power (on the one hand) which stands for those delightful paintings of the Greek artists and the miraculous works of Egyptian magi, but which (on the other) misleads through its false traces. If man is like God this likeness itself is already formulated in terms of a gap or difference.

This power, the fantasy or imagination, through which man approaches his creator so closely is at the same time the medium through which the essential difference between them becomes manifest. The notion of the poet as a second creator is thus strained. Tigerstedt, in an article about the origins of the poet/creator metaphor, points out the affinity between Ficino's ideas about man and those developed by Landino about the poet in particular.<sup>67</sup> His conclusion is that the kind of 'near similarity' between the poet (called creator only in the second half of the sixteenth century) and God which is typical of Renaissance Neoplatonism, differs essentially from medieval ideas about the

subject.<sup>68</sup> In the latter, there is still an 'unbridgeable gap' between a God who creates (out of nothing) and man or the poet who makes (from pre-existing material). Ficino and Landino, on the other hand, exalt man and 'aim (...) to make the subject of the exaltation as godlike as possible'.<sup>69</sup>

Tigerstedt, disappointingly, conceives of Ficino's caution as merely a ruse which Ficino employed to save his theologian's face. Farreaching comparisons (explains Tigerstedt) between man and God would have to be made carefully.

It remains unclear how, after the end of the Middle Ages, circumstances changed so that by the mid-16th century the metaphor based on these daring comparisons was in use. A considerable number of other critics and students of the period have, however, adopted an opinion like Tigerstedt's. S.K.Heninger Jr is one of the most prolific recent writers on the subject and the poet/creator metaphor is examined in many of his works. Heninger suggests by means of an analysis of the 'poetics of making' (which he finds in Sidney, Spenser, and finally, in Milton) that its texts, produced like microcosmi emanating from the 'foreconceit' of a minor or secondary creator, must yield, after a first, superficial and linear reading, a comprehension of the full design of the entire work.<sup>70</sup> Just as the world may be conceived as a mirror of its creator, the poem is not only a metaphor by the poet, but also one of or for him. But Heninger's formulations culminate in vagueness:

By correspondence, then, the poet himself, is a metaphor for the creating deity, occupying a place in the hierarchy of existence just a bit lower than God. (emphasis added)<sup>71</sup>

Once again (as was the case with Tigerstedt) there is some blurring at the edges of the crucial notion. Heninger himself, in another of his books, brings a quotation that unintentionally exemplifies the problem. It comes from William Cunningham's Itinerarium exstaticum (Rome, 1656):

Where in doth he [man] so neare approche unto God in likenesse: as by Science and Knowledge? for this thing is proper to God only, to know all thinges.<sup>72</sup>

Cunningham here encapsulates not only the idea of similarity and correspondence between God and man, but also that of their singularity

and difference. This difference escapes both Tigerstedt and Heninger's formulations. The poetic they present is, unconditionally, a 'poetic of correspondence', deficient because it ignores the less than absolutely originary function these poets assumed in relation to their work.<sup>73</sup> Elsewhere, Heninger himself realizes in the case of Sidney's theory of poetry that it includes an element of making as well as one of imitation.<sup>74</sup>

Michael Murrin responds to this fact by placing Sidney more carefully at a transitional point between Renaissance allegory (a poetic, not of making, but subservient to the dynamic of hiding-revealing of God's truth) and a Restoration, Neoclassical, self-conscious poetic of making.<sup>75</sup> Even more so than Sidney, Milton is said to have combined these two modes of writing in his work.<sup>76</sup> Such a 'modified' or 'transitional' notion of the poet as creator or maker is more germane to the present study. Murrin, however, historically pinpoints this notion more or less specifically between Renaissance and Restoration. From the present thesis, on the other hand, its emergence in England is shown to be the consequence of a way of thought which already began to emerge in 15th century Italy. But it is interesting to note that the tradition of Pican and Ficinian occultism reached a climax in this country exactly during the late English Renaissance. As a response to these problematics of the poet/creator metaphor and in order to avoid such awkwardnesses like 'just a bit lower', the term secretary is introduced here. The secretary is neither creator nor imitator but rather both at once. His texts are cut off from the divine truth, but signal and celebrate this very rupture by way of homage to the creator. The final section of this chapter looks at the secretarial work.

#### Section four

The work of the secretary could be called a practice of death.<sup>77</sup> The secretary's writing, showing a consciousness of its own plurality and inability to represent the divine voice, is like the script Toth offered to Thammuz. It threatens Thammuz' sovereignty by constituting a replacement, a deplacement of his living authority. The work of the secretary is founded upon division (to secrete: to separate), the fissure between hidden unity and the plurality of the manifest. His tool and

medium, the written word (secretary: he whose office it is to write) is inherently broken and cut off from transcendent meaning. Yet the secretary pays homage. His work differs from that of any sort of creator because it does not emerge in or from isolation. If it arises from rupture, if it is a secretion of some kind, the work is always accompanied, too, by a movement toward (the trace of) something which cannot be reached, an intangible origin, or an unrealizable goal. The secretary's text is witness to absence, and it is this absence to which homage is paid. Homage, literally man-age, is the (indirect) praise of an other by means of the acknowledgement of one's different, often inferior position. The word has connotations of vassalage and servanthood, as has secretary. Moreover, the negative dynamics upon which it builds has a positive counterpart which materializes in its meaning as praise. For in its indirectness, homage diverts attention from the other to the praising (it) self. If the secretary pays homage to the creator, it is through the full employment of exactly that which characterizes himself as human, limited, plural and material.

The secretary has a negative face as well as a positive one. Both show up in the practice of obscurity and in the texts of the occultists. Where the latter were driven by a desire to reach the hidden, absent and complete (a wish the object of which equalled closure or death, and that was contradicted by the very means through which such closure was envisaged), their work is, yet, copious, diverse and tends to value the material and the worldly. Edgar Wind, for instance, remarks on Ficino and Pico's Epicurean attitude to pleasure which is almost a supreme good for them,<sup>78</sup> and Trinkaus spots a similar pleasure in things sensual.<sup>79</sup> But for Trinkaus this pleasure in and affirmative attitude toward mundane things are part of a contradiction at the root of Ficino's thought:

The wonder is that with such a paean of praise to the status of civilised man, Ficino was not satisfied with his earthly condition.<sup>80</sup>

In the context of secretarial praise, there is no reason for such wonder. Indeed, Trinkaus himself suggests later in his book that Ficino's praise is part of his faith, of his yearning for transcendence, materialized in

the Pican allegorical text, or the theologia poetica (a phrase introduced by Wind):

Theologia poetica has an important place in the context of this book because it was one of the dominant ways in which the men of the Renaissance, through the humanists, moved toward the acceptance of a widened and deepened vision of human life and yet were able to discover in this movement a re-affirmation of their traditional Christian faith. (emphasis added)<sup>81</sup>

The notion of praise or celebration is, therefore, Janus faced.

Ong shows how praise, laus in Latin, includes at once a rhetorical and a religious aspect.<sup>82</sup> Such a concept of praise substantially informs a text like Sylvester's/DuBartas' Divine Weeks where plurality and pluriformity in the text itself is paralleled by manifold reference to the celebration of God through notions of ornament and rhetoric. DuBartas professes to 'love' contemplating God through his works which he first compares to a 'Robe' and later to the variety of Proteus' shapes as well as to the French with their 'Fantastike Fashions'.<sup>83</sup> Robes and fashion both belong to the realm of ornament and are themselves metaphors for rhetoric.

In the poetry and meditations of Thomas Traherne the cluster praise-pleasure-writing stands central. In her introduction to the Oxford edition (1966) of his poetry, Anne Ridler calls Traherne a

master of the Affirmative Way which pursues perfection through delight in the created world.<sup>84</sup>

As in earlier considered instances of the 'affirmative way', Traherne employs a technique of repetition. Colie suggests that Traherne read the great representatives of the via negativa, Dionysius the Areopagite (or pseudo-Dionysius), Cusa and Giordano Bruno.<sup>85</sup> Ridler's 'affirmative way' is, surely, a pun on Cusa's via negativa and a reminder of the affirmative aspect of his way. Martz,<sup>86</sup> rightly, prefers to think of Traherne's repetitions not as bad writing but as a method which the writer might have taken from Augustine and which

seeks to lead us on by repetition of the Known to what is unknown.<sup>87</sup>

This strategy of repetition as indirection, however, in Martz's reading, promises more than the secretarial text can achieve, for it purports to result, if not in objective knowledge, in a perception of truth internal to the writer. The work of the secretary, even if it always reaches for it, does not lead to such inner transcendence. Christian Cabalist texts time and again illustrate the problematic nature of the clear reflection which this perception would require. Martz himself virtually rejects the ideal of uncluttered, direct vision:

Very rarely, Augustine suggests, in the highest mystical state one may catch a glimpse of the Idea itself; but for the most part all we can hope to see is the reflection of the Divine Idea within our own minds, as in a mirror. (emphasis added)<sup>88</sup>

The metaphor of the mirror, obviously, points once more to the lattice of representation from which repetition itself was supposed to set the writer free.

An alternative approach to Traherne's art is suggested by his own reference to writing, creation and inwardness in the 'Centuries of Meditations'. For Traherne truth and insight are inseparable from their counterparts, untruth and confusion, and are experienced as arising against the latters' background. Early on, when the writer introduces and explains his work, this duplicity slips in. The following words make it difficult to decide the nature of his language:

I will open my Mouth in Parables: I will utter Things that have been Kept Secret from the Foundation of the World.<sup>89</sup>

What kind of secrets is Traherne going to 'utter' if his speech (or rather his writing) will be 'in Parables'? One is reminded of the double sense of secret, revealed and hidden. For parables (what is said of them in Matthew 13:10-13 bears this out) are figures of speech intended, not in the last place, to obscure. When the disciples ask Jesus, the archetypal parabolist, why he speaks in parables to the people on the lakeside, he answers them: 'It has been granted to you to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven; but to those others it has not been granted.' (Emphasis added)

Throughout the meditations Traherne considers in a very personal manner God's nature and man's knowledge of and relation to it. As in the work of other Christian Cabalist writers (for instance Fludd) such Knowledge is only deemed possible through the workings of man's inner capacity, the soul:

How Wise, would we esteem this presence of the understanding, to be more real then that of our Bodies! When my Soul is in Eden with our first Parents, I my self am there in a Blessed Maner. When I walk with Enoch, and see his Translation, I am Transported with Him. The present Age is too little to contain it. I can visit Noah in his Ark,<sup>90</sup>

As regards true knowledge, man is restricted to spiritual sight alone because it is impossible that God should take a visible shape:

They that Quarrel at the maner of GODS revealing Himself, are troubled, becaus He is Invisible. Yet it is Expedient that he should be so: for whatsoever is Visible is a Body: whatsoever is a Body excludeth other Things out of the place where it self is. If GOD therfore being infinit, were Visible, He would make it Impossible for any thing to have a Being Besides.<sup>91</sup>

But even if God is not visible, visible things (all of creation) cannot therefore be disdained. Everyone knows that they are his works and created from his goodness. In order to account for this as well as the notion of things as obstructions to, rather than occasions for, spiritual enlightenment, Traherne produces a division between prelapsarian and postlapsarian time, between God-made nature and man-made culture:

To Contemn the World, and to Enjoy the World, are Things contrary to each other. How then can we contemn the World which we are Born to Enjoy? Truly there are two Worlds. One was made by God, the other by Men. That made by God, was Great and Beautifull. Before the Fall, It was Adams Joy, and the Temple of his Glory. That made by Men is a Babel of Confusions: Invented Riches, Pomps and Vanities, brought in by Sin. Giv all (saith Thomas a Kempis) for all. Leav the one that you may enjoy the other.<sup>92</sup>

Traherne's description of his personal experience helps to illuminate this division. Born innocent, like a latter-day Adam, Traherne initially delights in his surroundings:

All appeared New, and Strange at the first, inexpressibly rare and Delightfull, and Beautifull. I was a little Stranger which at my Entrance into the World was Saluted and Surrounded with innumerable Joys.<sup>93</sup>

The Green Trees when I saw them first through one of the Gates Transported and Ravished me; their sweetnes and unusual Beauty made my Heart to leap, and almost mad with Extasie, they were such Strange and Wonderfull Thing[s]: The Men! O what Venerable and Reverend Creatures did the Aged seem! Immortal Cherubim!<sup>94</sup>

The repeated use of the word strange together with unusual and New, stresses the uniqueness of his youthful experience. Nothing yet, including himself (a little Stranger too) is blunted or tainted with the boredom and lack of wonder caused by acculturation. He is unperturbed in a God-made world. All too soon, however, the inevitable happens and the aura of strangeness pales. Education is much to blame, it is the literal leading out of paradise of the young child, his personal fall:

The first Light which shined in my Infancy in its Primitive and Innocent Clarity was totally Ecdysed: in so much that I was fain to learn all again. If you ask me how it was Ecdysed? Truly by the Customs and maners of Men, which like Contrary Winds blew it out: by an innumerable company of other Objects, rude vulgar and Worthless Things that like so many loads of Earth and Dung did overwhelm and Bury it: by the Impetuous Torrent of Wrong Desires in all others whom I saw or Knew that carried me away and alienated me from it: by a Whole Sea of other Matters and Concernments that Covered and Drowned it: finally by the Evil Influence of a Bad Education that did not foster and cherish it. All Mens thoughts and Words were about other Matters; They all prized New Things which I did not dream of. I was a stranger and unacquainted with them; I was little and reverenced their Authority (...) My Thoughts (...) were blotted out. And at last all the Celestial Great and Stable Treasures to which I was born, as wholly forgotten, as if they had never

been.<sup>95</sup>

Culture, aptly figuring as an 'anti-nature' (through 'adverse winds', 'impetuous torrents of desire' and a destructive flood), changes the happy little stranger into a vulnerable one, who loses his true sight as he grows more familiar and partakes in the man-made world. But there is a reversal, a point at which evil education in turn shifts into its own anti-nature. Traherne arrives at that point when he comes to the university which offers 'another Education'. The way back from culture and experience to the luminous state is not simply a reversal or a return, but rather involves more learning, more education and more culture:

Having been at the University, and received there the Taste and Tincture of another Education, I saw that there were Things in this World of which I never Dreamed, Glorious Secrets, and Glorious Persons past Imagination. There I saw that Logick, Ethicks, Physicks, Metaphysicks, Geometry, Astronomy, Poesie, Medicine, Grammer, Musick, Rhetorick, all Kinds of Arts Trades Mechanicisms that Adorned the World pertained to felicity. At least there I saw those Things, which afterwards I Knew to pertain unto it: And was Delighted in it. There I saw into the Nature of the Sea, the Heavens, the Sun, the Moon and Stars, the Elements, Minerals and Vegetables. All which appeared like the Kings Daughter, All Glorious within, and those Things which my Nurses and Parents should hav talkt of, there were taught unto Me.<sup>96</sup>

This new path to knowledge, however, Traherne hastens to add, is not free of the profanities of evil education. The unconcerned innocent existence of his infancy is past, so any new insight will have to be retrieved against a background of beckoning, seductive error:

Nevertheless som things were Defectiv too. There was never a Tutor that did professely Teach Felicity: tho that be the Mistress of all other Sciences. Nor did any of us Study these things but as Aliena, which we ought to hav studied as our own Enjoyments.<sup>97</sup>

Now, the notion of strangeness has lost its initial positive meaning. If the young child was an alien to the evils of education, the maturer

Traherne must struggle to stay clear of the strangeness which education has implanted in him.

Traherne's powerfully evoked childhood memory of an experience in an obscure room is highly significant as an icon of man's position vis a vis the world and truth. Even though it takes place in his early youth he has already, obviously, lost his initial innocence, his good strangeness. Senses of that strangeness and wonder now must be inferred negatively:

Once I remember (I think I was about 4 yeer old, when) I thus reasoned with my self. sitting in a little Obscure Room in my Fathers poor House. If there be a God, certainly He must be infinit in Goodness. And that I was prompted to, by a real Whispering Instinct of Nature.<sup>98</sup>

Milton used something similar to explain Adam's first religious experience:

(...)           Thou sun, said I, fair light,  
And thou enlightened earth, so fresh and gay,  
Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and planes,  
And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,  
Tell if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?  
Not of myself; by some greater maker then,  
(VIII, 273ff)

It is exactly within the tight and dark circumference of the obscure room or, in Adam's case, by the realization of his own outline and limitation, that the possibility, if not the necessity, of something incomparably bigger and very different is conceived. Even though man is born innocent, his view is always from an obscure room, where he is certain to be hemmed in and his vision clouded. Even though this experience stems from a period when 'more education' has not yet shown the way to alternative approaches to insight or truth, its nature is related to the lesson learnt later. Both operate along the via negativa.

For alongside the copious praise of and joy in nature and creation, one also can find a stern warning:

To think the World therfore a General Bedlam, or the Place of Madmen, and one self a Physician, is the most necessary Point of present Wisdom:<sup>99</sup>

Man is not only seen as physician but also as a 'Royal Chymist', whose task it is not to accept fallen nature passively, but to use it for ulterior purposes:

He thought within himself that this World was far better then Paradice, had men Eys to see its Glory and their Advantages for the very Miseries and sins and offences that are in it, are the Materials of his Joy and Triumph and Glory. So that He is to learn a Diviner Art that will now be Happy: and that is like a Royal Chymist to reign among Poisons to turn Scorpions into fishes, Weeds into flowers Bruises into Ornaments, Poisons into Cordials. And he that cannot this Art, of Extracting Good out of Evil, is to be accounted Nothing.<sup>100</sup>

Interestingly, Traherne uses two different concepts to denote the chemist's work: that of transmutation and that of extraction. The first represents the magical connotations attached to the chemist's work: nature truly changes its essence. The second rather approaches the surviving sense of the profession where something is extracted or filtered out of something else. As understood through the first concept, the work of the chemist does not really resemble the secretarial work, for that work has no power to transmute, to turn (for instance) what is hidden into full transparency. By the second concept, on the other hand, the secretarial work is suggested, since it indicates exactly that work's capacity to 'extract' good out of its limited linguistic predicament.

If the autobiographical element in Traherne's work sheds a light upon the manner in which his experience and use of the via negativa associates it with our notion of the secretarial text, Traherne's interesting treatment of creation through the terms of want and excess in the first Meditation add further depth to this association. Traherne writes in terms of want and excess about the conditions of creation, terms which in Christian Cabalist texts are directly connected with the problems of similarity and difference and the gap assumed to exist between this world and God.

As Pictures are made Curious by Lights and Shades, which without Shades, could not be: so is Felicitie composed of Wants and Supplies, whithout which Mixture there could no Felcity. Were there no Needs, Wants would be Wanting themselvs: And Supplies Superfluous. Want being the Parent of Celestial Treasure. It is very Strange; Want itself is a a Treasure in Heaven: And so Great an one, that without it there could be no Treasure. GOD did infinitely for us, when He made us to Want like GODS, that like GODS, we might be satisfied. The Heathen DIETIES [sic] wanted nothing, and were therefore unhappy; for they had no Being. But the LORD GOD of Israel the Living and True GOD, was from all Eternity, and from all Eternity Wanted like a GOD. He Wanted the Communication of his Divine Essence, and Persons to Enjoy it. He Wanted Worlds, He wanted Spectators, He wanted Joys, He wanted Treasures. He Wanted, yet he wanted not, for he had them.<sup>101</sup>

This last paradox of God wanting and not wanting (since he includes all), is later linked to a notion of excess:

This is very strange that GOD should Want, for in Him is the Fulness of all Blessedness: He overfloweth Eternally. His Wants are as Glorious as Infinit. (...) He is from Eternity full of Want.<sup>102</sup>

'Want being the Parent of Celestial Treasure', it is indeed the principle from which creation evolves. God's need for communication (which in the Hermetic cosmogony nearly amounts to divine vanity, with creation taking place as a result of a need to mirror oneself and to be admired) makes him create worlds and even spectators. Those motivations are perilously ungodlike, and necessitate a complementary movement or emanation which will incorporate the very satisfaction of the divine desire into the 'wanting' subject, God, himself. While the idea of want as the first reason for creation underscores creation's extraneous and essentially different nature (different from the godhead), the notion of excess covers up such an abyss. Thus creation is both different from and similar to its maker, while the similarity itself is conceived as a vast yet even so, inadequate copy of that model. The excessive material signals at once its difference from the model, that model's infinite power of generation,

and paradoxically, the model's incomparable completeness. In addition, man is provided with a powerful want similar to God's, the same desire which Ficino held responsible for man's religious impulses. Man is planted in the middle of this economy of lack and excess, eminently able to respond to the lack or want by his metaphysical and moral yearnings. And he 'enjoys' (and writes) the abundance or excess but always in the context of difference in which that excess is manifest.

Traherne's Thanksgivings thus can be read in the light of Traherne's own remarks on lack and abundance. They are long, oddly shaped poetic structures, and, as their title suggests, they resemble religious, incantatory verse. Very frequently, they are encyclopedic chants, composed mainly from lists of words. Their rhapsodic tone and pace turns the catalogue into something like a feast of enunciation.

O Miracle  
Of divine Goodness!  
O Fire! O flame of Zeal, and Love, and Joy!  
Even for our Earthly bodies, hast thou created all things.  
Visible.  
Material.  
Sensible.  
Animals,  
Vegetables,  
Minerals,  
Bodies celestial,  
Bodies terrestrial,  
The four Elements,  
Volatile Spirits,  
Trees, Herbs, and Flowers,  
The Influences of Heaven,  
Clouds, Vapors, Wind,  
Dew, Rain, Hail, and Snow,  
Light and Darkness, Night and Day,  
The Seasons of the Year.  
Springs, Rivers, Fountains, Oceans,  
Gold, Silver, and precious Stones.  
Corn, Wine and Oyl,

The Sun, Moon, and Stars,  
Cities, Nations, Kingdoms.  
And the Bodies of Men, the greatest Treasure of all,  
For each other.103

Although these series have some internal organization, the overall picture does not suggest an intention to make the catalogue reflect either processes or hierarchies of creation. As 'thanksgiving', the text mimetically thanks and appreciates by conveying a sense of abundance. This is done not only by enumeration, which simulates completeness, but also by a reliance and play on the sound of single words. This last fact is especially emphasized, because from the fifth line onward, adjectives and nouns appear almost exclusively and minimally in isolation, without any kind of relation that would require the use of a sentence. Only the last two lines revert quite suddenly (the first of them still looking much like the previous ones) to signification beyond simple naming. In accordance with the expected crescendo movement of rhapsody, the text fans out again from the fifth line, where very short lines of only one word, grow gradually into two, three and four-word ones. Correspondingly, there is a shift from 'quality' words (adjectives), or words denoting classes or categories (like visible, material, etc.) to more particular words: nouns. Finally, there is a reasonable amount of sound rhyme or assonance. Visible, Material, Sensible repeat an 'el'-sounding end; so do Animals, Vegetables, Minerals with 'els'. All this and the repetition of Bodies in two lines ending on 'al', achieves an incantatory effect. In the following lines, rhyme comes from correspondence of stress, although the lines

Gold, Silver, and precious Stones.

Corn, Wine and Oyl,

also constitute an assonance of o-i-o sounds

Traherne restricts himself to naked, unqualified words. In their isolation, they point no further than the sound of their signifier-surface. No verb, nor even adjective draws them out into a relation that will make them confess their faithfulness to a signified. This abandonment to surface, here carried to its extreme, is typical of the secretarial text, the heterogenous nature of which is sanctioned by

religious dedication. Such a dedication is mirrored in the poems' collective title of 'thanksgivings'.

Traherne belongs to a small number of seventeenth century English writers whose link with Christian Cabalism is easy to establish. His own quotation from 'Picus Mirandula' in the Fourth Meditation indicates this.<sup>104</sup> Any secretarial traits found in Milton's text, to which attention shifts once more, do not imply that he belonged to such a small group of occultist writers. The present chapter has dealt with a textual practice which answered a concern with questions (of representation, similitude and difference, man's place vis a vis God) that engaged a wider community than only a small number of committed cognoscenti.

Chapter eight Paradise Lost and the Secretarial Text

departing hence,  
As from his face I shall be hid, deprived  
His blessed countenance; here I could frequent,  
With worship, place by place where he vouchsafed  
Presence divine, and to my sons relate;  
On this mountain he appeared; (...)  
(PL, Book XI, 315-320)

Section one

The ways in which Paradise Lost addresses the questions of plenitude and mirror representation correspond with those which typify the secretarial text: the use of a technique that responds to the demand for 'full' expression through plural or fragmented representation is one such a correspondence. Rather than offering a smooth, unified texture, Milton's treatment of creation which adopts the various viewpoints of angels, man and God, as well as changing (and perhaps alternative) cosmogonic terminologies, presents a fragmented and problematic rewriting of that biblical episode. Like the secretarial text, Paradise Lost, moreover, positively foregrounds the sense of ambiguity, of human insufficiency and limitation which is at the root of this plural and broken mode of assertion. In the previous chapter the word 'homage' was introduced to denote this practice of foregrounding. Indeed, Paradise Lost's distinction among other hexameral poems like DuBartas' Divine Weeks and Works other tragedies of the fall like Grotius' Adamus Exul, or again, other scripture based epics like Cowley's Davideis, may be best caught in describing it as 'homage'. None of these other texts approaches the prominence and insistence with which Paradise Lost tackles the question of full and 'truth-full' assertion: Paradise Lost may retrospectively be considered as a text that pays secretarial homage. But in addition to the concept of full expression, 'homage' involves selfconsciousness: it assumes a certain role, adopted by the poet or secretary, vis as vis, or perhaps rather in his text. Unlike the

'creator', the poet-as-secretary cannot simply be thought of as situated outside, at the origin of his text.

In Paradise Lost, of course, the poet/narrator declares himself on numerous occasions, especially in the invocations. Addison, dissatisfied though also fascinated with the distraction, noticed it less than a hundred years after Paradise Lost was first published:

If the poet, even in the ordinary course of his narration, should speak as little as possible, he should certainly never let the narration sleep for the sake of any reflections of his own (...) Milton's complaint of his blindness, his panegyric on marriage, his reflections on Adam and Eve's going naked, of the angels' eating, and several other passages in the poem, are liable to the same exception, tho' I must confess that there is such a great beauty in these very digressions that I would not wish them out of his poem.<sup>1</sup>

Addison clearly does not distinguish between narrative voices. Using his examples one would have to separate between Milton, the historical man, and the narrator, a person who may occasionally coincide with the former, but whose relations to that historical man are not to be taken for granted.<sup>2</sup>

The invocations to books I, III, VII and IX are gestures toward a time-honoured literary tradition, as well as movements away from it. Homer and Virgil, Milton's precursors in the epic genre (of whom the former, blind 'Maeonides' (III,35) was most personally touching), at the outset of their work had asked for muses' help and inspiration, but neither had done so with Milton's detail and persistence. Milton's muse is a superior, spiritual being, whose 'meaning' as such might seem more or less clear to the reader, but whose various 'name[s]' (VII,5) have generated a tangle of critical confusion. Milton stretches the traditional invocation, both in length and through repetition, so that it well-nigh forms a story of its own. This is R.Sundell's argument when he views the prologues (as he calls the invocations) as having 'their own progression': one in which the poet is seen to proceed from a firm humbleness (book I), via 'excessive self-concern' (book III) and an

inevitable awareness of 'dependence' (book VII), to a final 'new confidence' (book IX).<sup>3</sup>

Neither have Milton's invocations very much in common with another opening technique used in epic, for instance, in Orlando Furioso. Ariosto was in the habit of introducing a new canto with a brief, and often moralizing, thought which sums up the state of affairs his narrative has reached. And indeed Milton and Ariosto's beginnings are equally, though differently disruptive. In Ariosto's case, the rupture is effected by a changing involvement of the narrating voice: where that voice usually is committed to 'sing of knights and ladies, of love and arms, of courtly chivalry, courageous deeds', of 'Orlando, driven raving mad by love';<sup>4</sup> at the beginnings of the cantos it takes distance from those events and comments upon them. In Paradise Lost there is virtually no such moral recapitulation, yet here too, the narrator's voice, for a moment, speaks for itself. What sets Milton's invocations apart is that the voice speaks not merely for, but of itself.

In Paradise Lost such autobiographical reference is not wholly misplaced since the invocations are the occasion on which the blind poet formally begs for insight. The poetic persona slips with uncanny ease into the poet's person. He, whose eyes are in reality blinded and 'find no dawn' (III,24), makes more than the conventional plea for vision in his role of epic narrator. The text, especially of the invocation to book III, moves between the epic convention and the narrator's reality. The lines

nor sometimes forget  
Those other two equalled with me in fate,  
So were I equalled with them in renown,  
Blind Thamyris, and blind Maeonides,  
And Tiresias and Phineus prophets old.  
(III,32-36)

insistently displace the merely conventional. The personal 'fate' precedes and takes precedence over a more distant 'renown', and 'blind' is twice repeated before 'prophets old', first linking the poet to his precursors in his physical suffering. Similarly governed by this infection or invasion of the conventional by the personal is the distance traversed between lines 12 and 21 of book III, where the phrase

'Thee I revisit' is reiterated. At first, 'Thee I revisit now with bolder wing' is still rooted within the traditional context of traffic between spirit and poet. Yet less than ten lines later, 'Thee I revisit' introduces a different discourse, namely the one of the poet's physical suffering. Such a leap is also made between the first and second invocations in their entirety. The poet's request for instruction in the first invocation still is innocent and traditional; so 'what in me is dark/I lumine' (I, 22-23) can only retrospectively (after a reading of book III) reflect anything more specific than a generalized notion of worldly impenetrability as regards the truth divine. It is as if the next invocation cannot leave things at that. More than indicating something about the pains personally endured, the shift from conventional to personal literally updates the otherwise more or less rhetorical topic of blindness and insight, and thereby brings it into full view.

The relations between blindness and insight, and the paradoxical meaning of 'vision', have a long history. Western tradition features several wise, blind men, often called visionaries, and is eloquent about the obscurity of mere, carnal vision. True vision comes upon the narrator of the Divine Comedy while he is asleep, when his eyes are shut against the seductions of the world, whilst in Chaucer's shorter poems (Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame or The Parliament of Fowles), the question of sleep and the cause, meaning and status of dreams, is given a central role, especially in the poems' opening parts. Fludd's work is quite representative in this respect: it was already seen how he specifies the conditions for insightful dreams.<sup>5</sup> The paradoxical sense Fludd attached to 'vision' accounts for the fact that his fascination with certain forms of physics does not prevent him from issuing warnings against the perils of the worldly spectacle. The experiments of the Mosaicall Philosophy seek neither to prove nor to disprove scientific hypotheses through observation but are intended to illuminate immanent truths. Platonism already required man to abstain from things in order to address himself to pure being: he was to look upward (into the uniform skies, or into the purifying (and blinding) light of the sun) and avert his gaze from below. Or again, man had to re-focus his look from outside to inside. With such ambiguous notions as blindness and shadow, which, as Adelman notes,<sup>6</sup> connote both obscurity and revelation, a paradoxical bond was formed in which only these two elements together brought knowledge of the truth.

Vision per se had no revelatory power unless it collapsed into a certain form of its opposite. In Paradise Lost's invocations, that collapse becomes explicit: the problematic, fossilized in the locus classicus of insightful blindness, is reanimated when put alongside a 'real', present, and personal question of vision. Can and does divine inspiration replace or compensate for the poet's damaged vision? In this chapter it is argued that it would have been problematic for Milton to assume this naively.

### Section two

In the first two invocations especially, the ambiguities of vision are doubly addressed, through the role of the poet/narrator and through that of the muse. The invocations provide plural and equivocal accounts of both. The role of the poet is elucidated through the several persons and places he is associated with. The poet, as it were, offers the 'heavenly Muse' (I,6) three different places to meet him; in each of these he links himself with a different function:

Sing heavenly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,  
In the beginning how the heavens and earth  
Rose out of chaos: or if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,  
(I, 6-13)

Like Moses, he is both prophet (on Oreb) and receiver, scribe or secretary, and transmitter of the Law (on Sinai); on Sion hill, again, he is a prophet with Isaiah.

Furthermore, in book III the poet wishes to be 'equalled' with two blind predecessors, Thamyris and Homer, and two prophets, Tiresias and Phineus, both blind as well. The equation prophet-poet was common; here is Sidney on the subject:

Among the Romans a poet was called vates, which is as much as

a diviner, foreseer, or prophet.<sup>7</sup>

This is especially true for Sidney who considers the poet to be the 'first light-giver to ignorance'. Common sense, from Sidney's time until today has not altered much: it is especially with divination that prophecy is associated. It is difficult to see how Milton would have conceived of himself as a 'diviner' or 'foreseer' in Paradise Lost which was so obviously based on looking back to the oldest story. Knowledge of the future, however, is not emphasized in the original meaning of 'prophecy' which is (in the Greek) speaking forth. Indeed, the prophet shares much with Moses, the lawgiver, who inscribes and then speaks forth the ten commandments. Prophecy, hence, is distinguished not only in its time-transcending power, but also by its mediatorial role. Catherine Belsey, recently, writes: 'The prophetic allusion confirms divine authority: the voice of God speaks through his chosen poet and guarantees the truth of the promise the text affirms. But the speaker whose poem is a gift of God, a bond between heaven and earth, is clearly not God but human and subject to human limits.'<sup>8</sup> Daiches, possibly responding to this fact, calls the poet of the invocations first of all a 'spokesman', a title which he qualifies with the adjective 'inspired'.<sup>9</sup> This is how Milton himself formulated it in his Christian Doctrine:

Moreover the term prophet is applied not only to a man able to foretell the future, but also to anyone endowed with exceptional piety and wisdom for the purpose of teaching:<sup>10</sup>

If, therefore, the poet of Paradise Lost associates himself with prophecy, it is first of all its powers of assertion and dissemination rather than its transcendental vision he refers to. Note how in the following quotation, the request for divine assistance is couched in terms of vision and in terms of expression, literally side by side:

what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the hight of this great argument  
I may assert eternal providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.  
(I,22-26)

Here indeed, illumination (a term from the vocabulary of visual perception) is subservient to assertion and justification. The former functions to ensure the success of the latter. Clearly, assertion is prominent enough an element in the prophet's task to figure as an ultimate goal. A precedent of this occurs in Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians (14) where prophecy is restricted to the dissemination of divine truth which itself is received in ecstasy; prophecy communicates with man, ecstasy with God:

Put love first; but there are other gifts of the Spirit at which you should aim also, and above all prophecy. When a man is using the language of ecstasy he is talking with God, not with men, for no man understands him; he is no doubt inspired, but he speaks mysteries. On the other hand, when a man prophesies, he is talking to men, and his words have power to build; they stimulate and they encourage. The language of ecstasy is good for the speaker himself, but it is prophecy that builds up a Christian community.  
(emphasis added)

Lines 13-40 of Book III approach the fraught interactions between the poet and the heavenly muse (or holy light, or pure ethereal stream, etc.)<sup>11</sup> in predominantly visual terms, while persistently including notions referring to expression. In fact, this is the nature of the first image of the poet who sums up his, apparently satisfactory ('Taught by the heavenly Muse') course of action so far. Its events are spoken of with reference to singing ('Through utter and through middle darkness born/With other notes than to the Orphean lyre/I sung of Chaos and eternal Night' III, 16-18), only then to proceed to a vocabulary of vision ('vital lamp' (22), 'eyes' (23), 'piercing ray' (24)). This new sequence is interrupted in line 28, when the theme of song is resumed, 'Smit with the love of sacred song', and from that point the text leads into the allusions to blind poets and prophets, a topic which includes the two elements of vision and expression at once. This combination is retained in the lines ending with line 40, where the simile of the nightingale once more connects (lack of) vision (here darkness) with song.

This repeated alternation and intermixture of vision and expression/assertion/song constitutes the kind of shift in metaphor that makes (poetic) texts linguistically appealing. But if we consider the poet's reflections on his vocation, its significance increases. This is born out by the concluding lines of the invocation, where a structure similar to that at the end of the first invocation ('Illumine...That to the hight of this great argument/I may assert') re-emerges:

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

(III, 51-55)

Now the process of illumination, referred to briefly at I, 23, is described in detail. Naturally, it is a visual procedure, conveyed in figures of inwardness and purgation with which the reader of other descriptions of the process of illumination is familiar. The visual bias is underlined by the unusual image of the mind as a spiritual hall of mirrors, a place covered with eyes. The provenance of this image is the notion of a reflection (or perception) which is more reliable and immediately in touch with the divine when it arises from within the subject, than when the latter gleans it from the world outside. Yet in Milton's text, such inward vision forms an alternative, and only follows its mundane relative ('So much the rather'; 'wisdom at one entrance quite shut out' (50)) rather than being a straightforwardly superior form of vision. The description of his lost, external vision is full of longing and passion, a passion which turns the lost sights into delightful images, not at all easily dismissed in favour of the more abstract vision he will now have 'So much the rather'.

Indeed the resort to inwardness is hardly unequivocal and sustained, for it turns out not to be the vision only that the poet wants eventually to attain, but 'that I may see and tell' (emphasis added). This is not illumination for its own sake, and it does not only serve to enlighten and purify its receiver. Rather (in the vein of Paul's words) the poet needs it in order to fulfil his part as a 'prophet', in order to speak

forth. The mystic (as Pater recognized) does not only shut his eyes (in order to see), but also closes his mouth (the Greek *μυεῖσθαι* means close-mouthed);<sup>12</sup> in this respect neither Milton nor the writer of secretarial texts are mystics.

The poet's gestures toward vision and insight are, therefore, consistently enfolded in or even overtaken by the question of his vocation as a writer, just as the prophet's claim to vision cannot be seen in isolation from his role as its assertor. The transparency of such a vision is not kept aloof from the contingencies of language. Surely, it is this kind of prophecy which *Paradise Lost* itself constitutes, when it tells its readers (whether in the 17th or the 20th century) of events that are not only *not* in the future, but that end with visions of a future which is and had been long past. Instead, the poem is a revision or re-enunciation of a (number of) text(s), a project in which the inevitable and explicit reference to previous texts heavily underlines the assertive/expressive side of prophecy. After all, the literary tradition of invocation had been long; even the heavenly muse appears cloaked in the rich and varied stuff of such a tradition.

### Section three

The presence invoked in books I, III, and VII is pluriform and addressed with many names. The possible identifications (for instance, as the Logos, the Holy Spirit, Urania, or the Son) are copious. The poet himself does not seem to encourage the reader to seek too avidly for that identification when, after hesitantly hailing Urania ('Urania, by that name/If rightly thou art called' (VII, 1-2) he exclaims: 'The meaning, not the name I call' (VII, 5). Yet why does the poet use so many names? The answer is obvious: this multitude of names itself affirms what is sanctioned by the concluding exclamation, namely, that they expose, in their vociferous variety, their own limitation compared with the unequivocal and unique Name. The poet may be calling for the meaning, heavenly presence, or truth, but he must do so with insufficient names. Moreover, this heavenly presence is not only incapable of being called by the one Name, sole custodian of its meaning; its vocation and place are also rather elusive.

In book I, the heavenly muse sings (6) and inspires (7) the poet's ambitious song; she is either on Oreb, Sinai or mount Zion (10). In addition, or more particularly ('And chiefly thou') there is the (holy) Spirit who instructs while he resides in the 'upright heart' (17-19) and illuminates and raises (23). While this raising can still be understood in a figurative sense: 'what is low [in me] raise and support' (24), in the next invocation (which as usual elaborates the earlier) the holy light either virtually lowers itself to its recipient, or really raises the latter to his high position.

In book III, holy light enlightens ('sovereign vital lamp', (22)) and is somewhere beyond the 'Stygian pool' (14) and 'middle darkness' (16) in a place the poet revisits by ascent. However, visits are (or rather have been) also made in the opposite direction, from holy light to the (now) blind poet ('but thou/Revisit'st not these eyes', (22-23)), and the invocation ends with a request for such a visit (51). Urania, in book VII, is asked for exactly that ('Descend' (1)) but she (or whoever she is not) has also guided the poet up to heaven (14) from where he has enjoyed privileged views. Finally Urania is asked to govern the poet's song (30).<sup>13</sup>

The heavenly muse travels in two directions, like Raphael's 'all things' that move up and down, to and fro, between the empyrean and the earth ('one almighty is from whom/All things proceed, and up to him return' (V, 469-470). At the same time the poet travels too, guided by the heavenly muse, to the places he writes about. The muse inspires and guides, yet she also sings herself and 'governs' song. This lack of determinacy coupled with the vagueness concerning the identity of the inspiring agent, suggests that the invocations present a different situation from the conventional one, where the poet straightforwardly authorizes his writing by appeal to divine intervention. Here, the relations between writer and source are too intricate and unstable for such straightforwardness. The plurality of name, place and function makes the question of inspiration a concrete one about the process of composition, a question posed through the form or convention of invocation. The difficulty in identifying the presence partakes in the problem of representation, 'the meaning not the name I call'; and the same is true for the ascription of various places and roles. The poet/narrator probes

the question of blindness and insight: these notions offer a framework for investigating the problematics of representation, or in this case, of poetic composition.

Another visually oriented trope through which the question of poetic composition is approached is that of the ambiguous imagination, the indispensable power of vision which also may lead the poet badly astray. Not surprisingly, the word 'safe' makes a number of appearances in the invocations. Perhaps its first (though indirect) occurrence is already in book I, where the poet's incipient song is called 'adventurous'. In book III, in any case, 'safe' appears as such. 'Taught by the heavenly Muse to venture down' (19), the poet now returns to the dominion of holy light:

thee I revisit safe,  
And fell thy sovereign vital lamp;  
(III, 21-22)

Later, in book VII, the poet asks for safe conduct from the 'heaven of heavens' (13):

Up led by thee  
Into the heaven of heavens I have presumed,  
An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air,  
Thy tempering; with like safety guided down  
Return me to my native element:  
(12-16)

A few lines onward this is elaborated:

Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,  
More safe I sing with mortal voice,  
(23-24)

In both books the word safe is associated with a fear of flying. The invocations may begin by asking for the elevation called for by 'the highth of this great argument' (I,24) (and indeed, the invocations go on doing so in parallel terms, with the requests for illumination), but they also reveal alarm and apprehensiveness about it. At those points where the question of safety is posed (including the first, oblique reference to 'adventurous song') the interactions with the muse are virtually

always ambivalent in this respect. The invoking poet actually (despite his requests for illumination and exaltation) feels best and safest 'Within the visible diurnal sphere' (VII, 22), singing with 'mortal voice', even if he is

fallen on evil days,  
On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues;  
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,  
And solitude;  
(25-28)

Thus he virtually exchanges the privilege of a timeless and spatially boundless position for the security of a worldly and temporal one, 'Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole'. In book VII the lonely poet is back on earth, and the presence does neither transport him nor even illuminate: Urania visits him nightly and 'governs' his song. Just as she tempered (VII,15) the thin empyrean air for the exalted poet, she protects him from being excessive in his work: 'Still govern thou my song' (30). The interactions with the muse above all concern the imagination: their movements between light and darkness, heaven and earth attempt to accomplish the safe working of that equivocal faculty.

Yet these notions of safety, tempering and governing do not exactly achieve a comforting balance between blindness and insight, worldliness and heavenly inspiration. Janet Adelman has also discussed the poet's communications with the muse in the context of the imagination. For her these interactions constitute a 'guarantee' that will protect the poet from practising Satanic invention and, instead, will keep him within the orthodox tracks of imitation. But an earlier chapter of this thesis has shown that such distinctions between invention and imitation may prove hard to sustain, and Adelman, indeed, is forced to concede that 'Milton cannot ultimately be certain that the muse is in fact dictating his poem'.<sup>14</sup> The poet is not portrayed as the mere untroubled recipient (and mouthpiece) of a message of divine truth. The poetic of inspiration, the possibilities of which are traced throughout the invocations, reveals characteristics that bind it in contingency, traits which deny it the very transparency that had seemed its essence. The inspiring authority or voice behind an age-old 'insightful blindness' in this revision is bound

up in the weight and opacity of the human medium through which it speaks forth.

Even so, this is qualified by the short but ostensibly unequivocal words about inspiration in the last invocation:

If answerable style I can obtain  
From my celestial patroness, who deigns  
Her nightly visitation unimplored,  
And dictates to me slumbering, or inspires  
Easy my unpremeditated verse:

(IX, 20-24)

Not only does the celestial patroness here 'dictate' and 'inspire', she indeed acts upon a passive subject, unless in his sleep. And what about the verse, which, equally immediate, is not 'premeditated'? All, indeed, is 'hers, who brings it nightly to my ear' (47). Understandably, Hanford takes this as evidence that the poet considered himself to be truly possessed.<sup>15</sup> Such a reading of this last invocation would contradict the clearly more uncertain tone of the preceding ones in which the poet cannot simply claim such possession. And indeed, upon closer examination this apparent resoluteness of book IX's statement is attenuated by its immediate context. This invocation actually is full of contradictions. It is preceded by opening lines that conspicuously portray the self-conscious resolve of the poet (indeed, 'No more of talk...'(1) could almost equally refer to the impossibility of poet's talk with God or angel guest; words which here refer to the effect on such relations of the fall). In addition, the confident, decisive 'I must now change those notes to tragic' (5-6) is followed only 15 lines later by words that describe the poet as passive recipient. Also, those words themselves perversely nearly deny what has been discussed in the previous invocations: 'unimplored' (22) squarely opposes all the passionate requests of book III, while 'unpremeditated' (24) is out of tune with the very next lines:

Since first this subject for heroic song  
Pleased me long choosing, and beginning late;  
(25-26; emphasis added)

—where it is obviously the poet himself who chooses and begins, and not a celestial patroness who descends upon his slumbering soul to inspire him so as to perform a kind of automatic writing.

This last invocation constitutes an additional link in the line of ambiguity begun by the preceding ones, indeed, it is a final statement of the essence of that ambiguity. At first, there is the unusual assertiveness of the poet, almost blunt in its determination; following that, a complete reversal where the poet is merely possessed and so without a will of his own, and then instead of being resolved, this trenchant contradiction is actually amplified in subsequent, jarring lines. The panorama provided by the invocations shows the selfconscious negotiations of the poet with an ambivalent concept of the imagination, in which transcendent insight is anchored ('safely') to the immanence of blindness, or to the imperspicacity of writing. An idolatry of the name is avoided as the text, calling for meaning, comes into being not in the unequivocality of a translucent sign or name, but in the compound relationships that make up the web of writing.

#### Section four

The selfconsciousness typical of the secretarial writer and found in Milton's invocations, too, is not a consciousness of a transparent, 'self-containing' self, a self fully exposed to its own view. That would amount, in respect of *Paradise Lost*, to one more idolatry of the name, which would replace the reification of God. This was observed to have been emphatically avoided by the poet. In the secretarial work, self-consciousness functions as a necessarily sprung, incomplete consciousness of the self as different, and different exactly in relation to the unnameable divinity.<sup>16</sup> Self-consciousness is thus the consciousness of self as contingent, time-bound and, therefore, plural. However the lines at the end of the poem, spoken by Michael to Adam and Eve on the verge of banishment, their entrance into a time-bound world, apparently contradict this:

then wilt thou not be loath  
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess  
A paradise within thee, happier far.

(XII, 585-587)

Does not this 'Paradise within thee' speak of an ideal interiority, an inwardness the belief in which was seen to be qualified in the previous section, inextricably involved as this notion was with other ones of blindness and worldliness? Here, surely, the poet at least alludes to the possibility of a state of unbrokenness within, independent of the chaotic fragmentary state of the world. Louis Martz has understood these lines precisely in such a redemptive sense. Inner, contemplative wholeness is being promised as the reward of a virtuous life. Paradise Lost 'suggests that what has been lost may also be found, that man, as Augustine had said, "has the power to remember" the presence and the bounty of God' through the movement of 'the inward eye toward a recovery of Paradise'.<sup>17</sup> And Stanley Fish views the entire poem as intended to move the reader from the plane of literal/linear reading to one where 'eyes are being made capable of seeing things as they truly are already in the clarity of God's order'.<sup>18</sup> For Fish, the poem's ulterior motive is 'that the reader can learn not to rely on the way of knowing [the text] assumes but to rely instead on illumination and revelation'.<sup>19</sup> In order to achieve this effect, the text (says Fish) actually falsifies itself. The reader is expected to discover that Paradise Lost is not about what it says it is (namely the question of 'what cause'). In the course of reading, the reader is to realize that the promise such a question holds is false. But the consequence of Fish's theory must be that Paradise Lost is written with the sole purpose of undermining itself, a 'self-consuming artifact'. This, it would seem, seriously reduces the poem's scope to its moral/didactic elements, while understating the importance of others. Such a reductive concept ignores nothing less than the work's primarily literary, textual nature and preoccupation.

To illuminate such questions concerning inwardness, an apposite recent reference to the notion of falling and its attendant meanings of brokenness and insufficiency can be found in Paul de Man's excellent essay 'The Rhetoric of Temporality',<sup>20</sup> a title which itself, to some extent, though unintentionally, connects with a central topic of the last books of Paradise Lost: the entrance of the fallen couple into a time-subjected world, outside Eden. In this essay, de Man deals with the distinction between allegory and symbolism which dominates many theories

of romanticism. He shows how this distinction, usually identified as an antinomy, does not hold in the same 18th and 19th century texts from which it is gleaned. Symbolism, de Man explains, in those texts, is not finally defined as an ideally synthetic, immediate link between word and thing, and it becomes therefore essentially similar to its alleged opposite, allegory (which from the outset has been assumed to signify obscurely and indirectly). Symbolism turns out to be a form of linguistic representation as defined by the notion of allegory. Then the essay introduces the notion of irony. It is not enough, de Man argues, that irony as Aristotle defined it (saying one thing and meaning another), shows a similarity with allegory through a shared basis in discontinuity. It is especially through its self-consciousness (or self-reflectiveness, or Baudelaire's dédoublement) that irony is what it is. The prototype of such irony is a man stumbling, and laughing at himself as he falls; or even, a man, who, as he walks along, always envisages and anticipates the possibility of his fall. And (this is crucial for the discussion of inwardness in Paradise Lost) nothing in this form of self-consciousness is 'self-containing', or 'could somehow benefit the self'.<sup>21</sup> De Man's point is similar to the one this thesis makes in relation to Milton's poem. Paradise Lost's description of self-consciousness does not purport a self-satisfied, self-identical security. To the contrary, the notion of 'infinite agility' (De Man uses Schlegel's phrase)<sup>22</sup> which indicates the restless nature of ironic self-consciousness, is very suitable for Paradise Lost, too.

De Man's essay shows how notions of (organic) continuity and (subjective) self-consciousness, extracted from romantic texts, are also contradicted by those same texts, sometimes even by the very terms which had been understood to confirm those notions. De Man's ideas (even though they are originally formulated in relation to 18th and 19th century texts and not to those of the 17th century) are suggestive because they define allegory in a way that resembles what here has been said about it under the heading of the mirror *topos*; irony, too, as de Man studies it, offers a notion of self-consciousness akin to the present one. Could it hence be said that Milton's reference to a 'paradise within' is somehow ironical itself?<sup>23</sup>

Arguably it is so in the time-bound, 'infinitely agile' meaning de Man gives to irony. After all, it is ironic that Adam and Eve are promised (an interior) paradise at the very moment that they must leave Eden. The same thing, surely, cannot be meant, and this is underlined by the fact that the 'real' paradise (XII, 586) gets an initial capital while the inward one does not (XII, 587). In the poem's first edition of 1667 both paradieses appear with capitals, but in the second edition of 1674 (which Fowler follows for his Paradise Lost), this distinction is made.<sup>24</sup> This kind of repetition also occurs earlier in book XII. When Michael speaks of the final judgment (the only 'real' prophecy in the poem, since it looks forward to events that have neither taken place in Milton's time, nor, for that matter, up to the present day) he mentions another un-capitalised paradise. This time it is not an inward one, but it is situated in the absolute futurity of an existence ('ages of endless date' (549)) when fallen differences are finally dissolved:

and thence shall come,  
When this world's dissolution shall be ripe,  
With glory and power to judge both quick and dead,  
To judge the unfaithful dead, but to reward  
His faithful, and receive them into bliss,  
Whether in heaven or on earth, for then the earth  
Shall all be paradise, far happier place  
Than this of Eden, and far happier days.

(458-465)

Again, the post-judgmental paradise is not the same. It is not the same as the garden, 'this Eden', but nor is it that inward paradise promised later on in lines 585-587. The effect of this repeated revaluation of paradise is that its identity remains oblique. From being a definite location, it turns into a state with variable characteristics. Irony has this effect: it equivocates and sets into motion an infinitely regressive play of meanings in which one (kind of) paradise leads to another, and that to yet another. One occurrence of this infinite regression was treated earlier: it was extremely difficult to distinguish categorically between the unfallen and the fallen life described in the last few books. Rupture and difference (it was argued) then, are always anterior insofar as they are inscribed in the very process of creation, the circumstances

and consequences of which loom largely in the poem. It transpires, in addition, that it is only through 'dissolution', the unmaking of 'this world' that this rupture is to be repaired. After that restoration, when equivocality and plurivalence become transparency and unambiguousness, irony's play (or infinite agility) comes to a halt. But then: so does the world. It is only with the destruction of the world, as it came to be in creation, that the final, enduring paradise is reached. In addition, such a change from creation to dissolution is, in different terms (and once more reverting to de Man), also a change from 'error' to 'death',<sup>25</sup> so that the very question of freedom which is so essential in the poem, and which is defined as freedom to err, becomes irrelevant. The final paradise proves to be beyond comprehension or definition. Its existence is only conceivable negatively -a world (in which) man cannot think, in which he 'is' without the freedom to choose or err which was given him together with life itself, in which he 'is' dead:

I at first with two fair gifts  
Created him endowed, with happiness  
And immortality: that fondly lost,  
This other served but to eternize woe;  
Till I provided death; so death becomes  
His final remedy, and after life  
Tried in sharp tribulation, and refined  
By faith and faithful works, to second life,  
Waked in the renovation of the just,  
Resigns him up with heaven and earth renewed.  
(PL Book XI, 57-65)

The renewed, second life and is (after) death in these lines: 'death becomes/His final remedy'. While the two states previously implicated each other, they now, finally, coincide.

The final paradise of book XII is, as would be expectd, defined by notions of death and dissolution. It is a paradise obtained by martyrdom, pre-figured in Jesus' exemplary life on earth, and by his crucifixion (411ff), which is re-lived by Adam and his progeny:

suffering for truth's sake

Is fortitude to highest victory,  
And to the faithful death the gate of life;  
(569-571)

Thus the paradise within is situated between two other kinds of paradise: the one, now lost, held the promise of eternal life, but not without the crucial possibility of death and rupture; the other (coming when the 'race' (554) of time into which the couple are precipitated, will 'stand fixed' (555)), holds out another eternity, now after death. Death, which is allowed into the world in book IX, before losing its outline or difference by coinciding with the final paradise, is interiorized in the paradise within ('both death and I/Am found eternal, and incorporate both,/Nor on my part single, in me all/Posterity stands cursed:' (X, 815-818)). Adam and Eve learn to accept the consequences of their fallibility and fall. Michael's final lesson consists of two parts which together represent this process of the interiorization of fallibility or of death. First, Adam must acknowledge his claim on less than absolute knowledge:

This having learned, thou hast attained the sum  
Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the stars  
Thou Knew'st by name, and all the ethereal powers,  
All secrets of the deep, all nature's works,  
Or works of God in heaven, air, earth or sea,  
(XII, 575-579)

And, second, Adam must positively act in recognition of this:

Deeds to thy Knowledge answerable . . . , add faith,  
Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,  
By name to come called Charity, the soul  
Of all the rest:  
(XII, 582-585)

This notion of the interiorization of death determines a play of meanings, in this last book, on the word truth. Its fulcrum lies in the difference between truth, spiritual and interior, which Michael promises to the couple (485ff), on the one hand, and its 'outward', and 'specious' shadow image, forcefully appropriated by the same 'grievous wolves' (508)

(epitomized by the Roman Catholic church) that Milton had mentioned in 'Lycidas'. The latter kind of truth is fallacious because purloined, the wolves appropriate something that is not theirs to take. The problem is again one of overreaching:

to themselves appropriating  
The Spirit of God, promised alike and given  
To all believers;  
(XII, 518-520)

for on earth  
Who against faith and conscience can be heard  
Infallible?  
(XII, 528-530)

The voracity of the wolves is analogous to the sin of Paradise Lost with its connotations of greed, impatience and immoderation.

Similar epistemological iconoclasm in the Christian Doctrine, testifies to the pervasiveness of Milton's distrust of this 'availing[ing] themselves of names,/Places, and titles' (515). In the Christian Doctrine he outdoes Protestant orthodoxy,<sup>26</sup> by advocating the entire replacement of the (written) Old Law with the (spiritual) Covenant of Faith:

Once the gospel, the new covenant through faith in Christ, is introduced, then all the old covenant, in other words the entire Mosaic law, is abolished.<sup>27</sup>

Milton's dislike of biblical interpretation could even lead him to admit the New Testament's 'corruption',<sup>28</sup> and to suggest that the written text (the New Testament) should be dispensed with altogether since 'the Spirit which is given to us is a more certain guide' than it.<sup>29</sup>

What, then, is the nature of the 'real' truth, the paradise within, which Michael has shown to be available for man? It is remarkable that in all these instances in Paradise Lost this truth is put negatively (recalling the method of the via negativa), in contrast with the above false attempts to take possession of names, places and titles, or as against the literalism of the Law. The spiritual and interior truth is above all the opposite of its authoritarian, monopolized form: Paradise Lost is

very reticent about any other truth than that of self-moderation, or consciousness of limitation. At the same time, the Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost themselves are obvious evidence that the holy scripture and its interpretation through scripture/writing are finally not abolished in favour of an entirely personal and inspired form of faith, a development which the attitude to wolves and testaments may well have made probable. Paradise Lost, seen from this perspective, demonstrates both through its textual methods and through the contents of its plot how an interpretation or re-writing of scripture itself can proclaim the principles of epistemological iconoclasm, the opposite of the truth-stealing, exegetical activities of the grievous wolves. Paradise Lost illustrates how writing (re-writing the story of Genesis) may avoid the false act of (re-)appropriation, how it may stay clear of the temptation to reach beyond its proper power. When Adam accepts his paradise within, he does not thereby accept a spirituality which will enable and entitle him (repeating Satanic and wolfish errors) to own truth and infallibility, but rather one which permits him to face the death that has now entered his world explicitly, the principle of fragmentariness and difference which his fall has instituted as an awareness. What can be said about truth understood by the spirit (514) is that it is not the one that postures as 'outward rites' and 'specious forms' (534). If, therefore, an 'inside' is established by the paradise within, it is, like the inside of irony, the inside constituted by a consciousness aware of itself as incomplete. This is also the irony de Man associates with temporality and man's attitude vis a vis it. That irony of temporality comes to a halt only outside duration (or indeed the text) in 'ages of endless date'.

This interpretation of Paradise Lost as introducing an ironic notion of selfconsciousness also affects the significance of the 'happy end' (605), the final, post-judgmental paradise the meditation upon and hope for which (Michael tells Adam) will cheer man in the confused and 'sad' days to follow. Herman Rapaport deals with this via Walter Benjamin's notion of the work of mourning,<sup>30</sup> an activity taken up by Adam and Eve at the end of book XII, and which characteristically involves hope (as distinguished from Satan's unconstructive work of melancholy). Rapaport, too, speaks of the interiorization of death, the self-consciousness of

limitation and brokenness, and he argues, that these do not, in this case, have a finally negative meaning. Louis Martz, in his Poet of Exile, and inspired by the poetry of St John Perse, picks up a consistently positive strain in Milton's story of the fall:

The true princes of exile,<sup>then,</sup> are those who find a zest in the act of living, those who do their work, out of love for the job, or out of a sense that what they do is significant, although the job may seem menial or trivial, to the great ones of the world (...) These are the cheerful ways of men which Milton also includes in his poem, through many different devices.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, both Rapaport's work and the present thesis prefer a less epiphanic concept of this aspect of Paradise Lost, yet its presence is evident. The 'cheerful ways of men', this thesis argues, retaining the stress on 'man' but redirecting the metaphor to the work of writing itself, are here the secretarial text as homage. The kind of writing, generated by such notions as plenitude or that of the mirror, or again in the invocations, is an instance of what form this homage could take. Doubtlessly, the poem contains other modes of writing which illustrate this dedication. Likely examples are the similes, or the long lists of names, places or things that appear in the final books.

The extra-temporal reunification with God and truth, and the hope held out by Michael to the punished couple signal the difference between their state and that of the fallen angel. Whereas Satan irrevocably falls away from God ('So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,/Farewell remorse: all good for me is lost;/Evil be thou my good; by thee at least/Divided empire with heaven's King I hold' (IV, 112), Michael, 'prophet of glad tidings, finisher/Of utmost hope!' (XII, 376), makes it clear that for mankind the distance from God has not become absolute. The hope given, however, looks toward a state beyond time and the world which the couple inhabit. Its very transcendence once more underlines the significance of the fall and fallibility: the unequivocal name is always beyond man who is situated in this world, and any attempt to reach it prematurely, before the end of time, can at the end of the poem, be seen as a repetition of the sin that brought about the fall. The secretarial text enacts the response to this warning.

Notes to Introduction

1. A.J.A.Waldock, Paradise Lost and its Critics. (Cambridge, 1947) 17.
2. J.Culler, The Pursuit of Signs. (London, 1981) 103. See also L. Marin, 'The Iconic Text and the Theory of Enunciation', NLH, XIV-3 (1983), 553-597. In this essay about Renaissance literature and modern theory Marin explores the relation between the modern critic and the Renaissance text, indicating how intertextuality affects not only the immediate environment of the work(s) studied, but equally covers that of the critic's writing on it.
3. J.L.Blaau, The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance. (New York, 1944). Cf. F.Secret, Les Kabbalistes Chrétiens de la Renaissance. (Paris, 1964).
4. A.Debus, The English Paracelsians. (London, 1965).
5. S.K.Heninger, Jr. Touches of Sweet Harmony. (San Marino, 1974).
6. F.Yates, The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age. (London, 1979) 1.
7. Ibid., 3.
8. Ibid., 5.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 2-3.
11. Blau (1944); 113-114.
12. Cf. F.Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition. (London, 1964) 66; D.P.Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic. (London, 1958).
13. Cf. F.Yates (1979), 19; the exact dimensions of the participation of his teachers in Pico's work as well as their identity are discussed in G.G.Scholem, 'Zur Geschichte der Anfänge der Christlichen Kabbala', in Essays Presented to Leo Baeck. (London, 1954) 158-194.
14. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, On the Dignity of Man. [1487] (trs1.Ch.G.Wallis) (New York, 1965) 4
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 5.
18. Ibid., 12.
19. Ibid., 21.
20. Ibid., 32.

21. *Ibid.*, 28.
22. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Heptaplus. [1489] (trs1.D. Carmichael) (New York, 1965) 84.
23. *Ibid.*, 69.
24. *Ibid.*, 78-79.
25. Both Secret (1964; especially 240) and Scholem (1954) emphasise how Cabala was adopted by both Jews and Christians as a spiritual weapon to defeat the other side. Jewish converts to Catholicism like Flavius Mithridates, Paul Heredia and Paul Ricci employed their Cabalist expertise to prove such mysteries as the Trinity, or the generation of the Son from the Father, whereas Jews (on the other hand) pointed at Cabala to defuse any Christian claim to superiority by arguing that Jesus and his disciples 'made up' their new faith from the study of esoteric writings.
26. Blau (1944); 19 and 74.
27. Cf. Secret (1964), 277.
28. Wallace Stevens, Selected Poems. (London, 1978) 78.
29. Three Books of Occult Philosophy. (trs1.J.Freake) (London 1651); in Heninger (1974), 15.
30. Yates (1964), 180 (quoting J.Dagens); that this tolerance, for the moment, was only of a limited nature is proved by Yates' later work (1979; 109-115) where she is surprised how the interest in Cabala among Elizabethans did not cause them to consider legalizing Judaism. Neither, for that matter, did the Puritans' 'Hebraistic' tendencies.
31. Cf. A Koyré, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe. (Baltimore, 1968); A. Debus, The Chemical Dream of the Renaissance. (Cambridge, 1968); M. Foucault, The Order of Things. (trs1.?) (London, 1970), or T.S. Eliot's notion of the 'dissociation of sensibility'
32. E. Cassirer, Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance. (Berlin, 1927) (my translation) 38.
33. H. Fisch, Jerusalem and Albion. (London, 1964) 12; and A. Easthope 'Towards the Autonomous Subject in Milton's "On His Blindness". In R. Machin & Ch. Norris (eds.) Poststructuralist Readings of English Poetry. (Cambridge, 1987) 130.
34. R. Daniells, Milton, Mannerism and Baroque. (Toronto, 1963).

35. M.M.Mahood, Poetry and Humanism. (London, 1950) 11.
36. J.A.Mazzeo, Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Studies. (London, 1964).
37. B.Vickers, (ed.) Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance. (Cambridge, 1986).
38. Cf.Yates (1979), and The Rosicrucian Enlightenment. (London, 1972).
39. For more extensive information, see the list produced by Secret (1964), 229ff.
40. Blau (1944), 113-114.
41. Ibid., 114.
42. For a thorough treatment of this subject see Kelley's Introduction to the Yale edition of Christian Doctrine (trs1.J.Carey; New Haven 1973)
43. M.Murrin, The Allegorical Epic. (Chicago, 1980).
44. S.Fish, Surprised by Sin. (London, 1967).
45. M.M.Mahood (1950).
46. S.K.Heninger, Jr. (1974), and 'Sidney and Milton: the poet as maker' in J.A.Wittreich (ed.) Milton and the Line of Vision. (Wisconsin (?), 1975).
47. Cf. D.Saurat, Milton, Man and Thinker. (trs1.?; London, 1924); R.Z.J.Werblowsky, 'Milton and the Conjectura Cabballistica', J.Warb.&Court.Inst. XVII (1955); 90ff.
48. J.B.Broadbent, Some Graver Subject. (London, 1967). M.Kelley, This Great Argument. (Gloucester (Mass.), 1962). W.G.Madsen, From Shadowy Types to Truth. (New Haven, 1968). R.West, Milton and the Angels. (Athens (Georgia), 1955).
49. W.B.Hunter, 'Milton and the Thrice-Great Hermes', J.Eng.Germ.Philol. XLV (1946), 327-337. L.Martz, The Paradise Within. (New Haven, 1964). M.M.Mahood (1950). F.Secret (1964). E.W.Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture. (London, 1943); and Milton. (London, 1952). Werblowsky (1955).

Notes to Chapter one

1. H.Bloom, Kabbalah and Criticism (New York, 1975).
2. G.G.Scholem, 'Kabbalah,' Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem, 1971).
3. H.Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence (Oxford, 1973).
4. Bloom, Kabbalah 39 & *passim*.
5. Before Luria, the first step in the creation had been emanation. This was one of a substantial amount of original contributions Luria made to the Cabala. Cf. Scholem, (1971) 559.
6. G.G.Scholem, On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism (New York, 1969) 110-111.
7. *Ibid.*, 100-101.
8. *Ibid.*, 112.
9. *Ibid.*, 112-113.
10. *Ibid.*, 115-116.
11. *Ibid.*, 117.
12. E.M.W.Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London, 1942).
13. A.O.Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge (Mass.), 1963) 24.
14. *Ibid.*, 111.
15. Timaeus, 30g; in The Collected Dialogues trsl. B.Jowett (Princeton, 1973) 1162.
16. *Ibid.*, 33d; 1164.
17. Woman appears as the transformation of man who has failed to govern his senses; if, in turn, she fails, she changes into a brute. (Tim. 41/42; 1170-1171) 'Cowards' or the 'unrighteous' 'have changed into the nature of woman in the second generation' (*Ibid.*, 90e; 1210). 'Innocent, light-headed men' help the birds to their existence, while the 'wild pedestrian animals (...) came from those who had no philosophy in any of their thoughts, and never considered at all about the nature of the heavens'; fish 'were made out of the most entirely senseless and ignorant of all' (*Ibid.*, 91e)
18. Lovejoy The Great Chain 82ff.
19. *Ibid.*, 67.
20. *Ibid.*, 86.
21. Cf. E.N.Tigerstedt, 'The Poet as Creator', Comparative Literature Studies 5 (1968); 455-488.

22. Cf. Ch.Trinkaus, In Our Image and Likeness, 2 vols. (London, 1970).
23. E.Panofsky, Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art (Stockholm, 1960).
24. Nicholas Cusa, Of Learned Ignorance, trsl. Germain Heron (London, 1954) Book 2, Chapter 3; 79.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., Book 1, Chapter 12, 27.
27. Ibid.
28. Lovejoy The Great Chain 95.
29. M.Foucault, The Order of Things, trsl.? (London, 1980) 37-38.
30. A.E.Waite, Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers (London, 1888) 11.
31. Cf. C.S.Baldwin, Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice (Gloucester (Mass.), 1959) about the Renaissance vogue for dialogue and multi-participant conversation as literary form.
32. J.Reuchlin, De Verbo Mirifico, Facsimile Neudrueck (Stuttgart, 1964) 7.
33. Cf. Foucault The Order, Chapter 2; especially 17-27.
34. M.I.Corcoran, Milton's Paradise Lost with Reference to the Hexameral Background (Washington DC, 1945) A.Williams, The Common Expositor (North Carolina, 1948).
35. Th.Traherne, 'Thanksgivings for the Body,' Poems, Thanksgivings and Three Centuries, ed. A.Ridler (Oxford, 1966) p.381.
36. Cf. Louis Martz's Introduction to Th.Traherne's Poems (1966); 'massive repetitions', p.xviii.
37. The Divine Weeks and Works, trsl.J.Sylvester; ed.S.Snyder (Oxford, 1979) Vol.I, 111.
38. T.C.Cave, The Cornucopian Text (Oxford, 1979) 332.
39. C.G.Jung, 'Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon,' Collected Works, eds H.Read et al., trsl R.F.C.Hull (London, 1967) Vol.13, 109-189.
40. H.C.Agrrippa, Three Books of Occult Philosophy, trsl.J.F., (London, 1651) 'To the Reader'.
41. Ibid., 555.
42. F.Yates, The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age (London, 1979) 40.

43. D.P.Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic (London, 1958) 90.
44. J.L.Blau, The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance (New York, 1944) 83-84.
45. R.Colie, Paradoxia Epidemica (Princeton, 1966) resp. 3 and 17ff.
46. Yates, The Occult Philosophy 42-44.
47. Colie, Paradoxia 431-432.
48. R.Klibansky et al., Saturn and Melancholy (London, 1964) 134.
49. Ibid., 197.
50. Ibid., 255.
51. R.Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy [1621] ed.Holbrook Jackson. (London, 1978) 17.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., 20

Notes to Chapter two

1. For instance, cf. the title to Clavis Philosophiae (1633): 'Roberti Fluddi Armigeri & Medicinae Doctoris'.
2. Cf. pp.59-60 of this chapter.
3. Th.Fuller, The Worthies of England ed. D.Freeman (1662; London, 1952) 281.
4. H.Nollius, Hermetical Physick trsl H.Vaughan. The Works of Henry Vaughan.ed.L.C.Martin (Oxford, 1957-58) 547-93; esp.591.
5. Ibid.
6. R.Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy[1621] (London, 1978) esp. 253ff.
7. Nollius, Hermetical Physick 579.
8. J.B.Craven, Doctor Robert Fludd (Kirkwall, 1902) 22.
9. Fuller, Worthies 281.
10. S.Hutin, Robert Fludd (Paris, 1971) 46.
11. Craven, Doctor Robert Fludd 14.
12. Hutin, Robert Fludd 46.
13. R.Fludd, Answer to M.Foster (London, 1631) 21.
14. Hutin, Robert Fludd 48.
15. Fuller, Worthies 281.
16. A.G.Debus, The English Paracelsians (London, 1965) 54.
17. William Lilly in 'Catalogue' attached to Christian Astrology (London, 1647):  
'Robert Fludd- (...) hath wrote much Astrologie, he may justly be accounted the mirror of our times' (Fludd's opponent Gassendi also occurs in this 'Catalogue' with his Coelestis Observationes (1630).)
18. Cf. Ch.Webster, The Great Instauration (London, 1975) 54.
19. Craven, Doctor Robert Fludd 238.
20. A.G.Debus, The Chemical Dream of the Renaissance (Cambridge, 1968) 32.
21. Craven, Doctor Robert Fludd 31.
22. Cf. Responsum ad (...) M.Fosteri (Gouda, 1638) Fol.3: '(...) operatur etiam actes omnes'.
23. F.Secret, Les Kabbalistes Chrétiens de la Renaissance (Paris,

1964) 236.

24. M.Murrin, The Veil of Allegory (Chicago, 1969) 57ff.

25. Adamson has an interesting essay on the proximity between the ex-  
Deo theory and the kind of epistemological and allegorical problems  
that characterize Fludd's text. J.H.Adamson, 'The Creation,'  
Bright Essence, eds J.B.Hunter et al.(Salt Lake City, 1971)  
81-101.

26. Ibid., 81.

27. Corpus Hermeticum. ed & trsl A.J.Festugière & A.D.Nock (Paris,  
1945) Tome I; p.4; 10.

28. Insofar as this theory of creation speaks in terms of identity and  
difference that come into existence (as 'creation', as self and  
other) through repetition, one is reminded of Freud's 'Fort! Da!'  
and later Lacanian elaborations upon it (cf. the latter's 'The  
Unconscious and Repetition', in The Four Fundamental Concepts of  
Psychoanalysis ed J.A.Miller, trsl A.Sheridan (London, 1977)  
where statements like the following resemble Fludd's ideas: 'Is  
it not remarkable, that at the origin of the analytic experience,  
the real should have presented itself in the form of that which is  
unassimilable in it?', 55)

29. Only at the very end (299-300) of the Mosaicall Philosophy does  
Fludd avail himself of the standard phrases which scorn anything but  
the most sober and succinct expression. Anything else is  
'superficial flashes, and flying shadows'. In contrast, his own work  
is 'bold' and 'hardy'.'without any adornation'. These would seem  
perfunctory words that conclude a text which practices a rather dif-  
ferent kind of writing.

30. R.West, (Milton and the Angels (Athens (Georgia), 1955), for  
instance talks about Fludd's 'totally undisciplined repetitions'  
and 'rushing incoherence' (73); but he admits, throughout his  
book, how widely read texts like Fludd's, nevertheless, were.

31. D.Saurat, Milton et le matérialisme chrétien en Angleterre (Paris,  
1928) 14.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Cf.G.Scholem, The Kabbalah and its Symbolism (New York, 1969)

107-108.

36. It is worth remembering that in Renaissance drama the magus seems consistently a black magician or simply an imposter. In Marlowe's tragedy, Dr. Faustus wants power, not knowledge (cf. J. Schultz, Milton and Forbidden Knowledge (New York, 1955) 45; in John Wilson's The Cheats or Ben Jonson's The Alchemist magi are posing as wise men but are unmasked as greedy materialists. Nothing in what I have seen of Fludd's work justifies such a judgement but it is clear that the extraordinary powers he claimed could arouse suspicions concerning 'curiosity' or devilish presumption.

37. Cf. OED, 'History', section 5.

38. Respectively; Tom.I, 2; 123-129

137ff

143-146

159-161

39. Sir Th. Browne, Religio Medici, Major Works ed C.A. Patrides (Harmondsworth, 1977) 81.

40. Cf. E. Donato, 'The Museum's Furnace,' Textual Strategies ed. J. Harari (Cornell, 1984) 213-239; this essay, however, aims especially at refining the notion of the 'encyclopedia-library' to that of the 'museum' which appears more appropriate in the context of Flaubert's book.

41. J.L. Borges, 'The Library of Babel,' Labyrinths. trsl. J.E. Irby (Harmondsworth, 1978) respectively 85; 82; 85; 79; 85-86.

42. J. Milton, Areopagitica, (London, 1644) 12.

43. To describe this situation in such exclusively negative terms as 'powerlessness' and 'incapacity' does limited justice to the picture of creation drawn in this thesis. In fact, Christian Cabalist works are remarkably positive in tone. It is however impossible to ignore the importance of the theologia negativa or docta ignorantia and to incorporate its negative as well as its positive aspects. Hence terms like the above are necessary but not sufficient, they always reflect the power and energy with which in Christian Cabalist texts these notions of negativity narrowly interact. Questions like these concerning closure and excess occur prominently in deconstruction, a theory to which this thesis is indebted. Another study of an 'endlesse worke' is Jonathan Goldberg's (Baltimore, 1981) on the

Faerie Queene; his extensive notes read Renaissance poetry in the modern theoretical context. Some remarks especially relevant to the present discussion are in the first twenty pages of this book.

Notes to Chapter three

1. See B.Rajan, Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader (London, 1947) 40.
2. M.I.Corcoran, Milton's Paradise Lost with Reference to the Hexameral Background (Washington (DC), 1945) 4.
3. D.Daiches, 'The Opening of Paradise Lost', ed F.Kermode The Living Milton (London, 1960): 55-69, 63.
4. A.Williams, The Common Expositor (N.Carolina, 1948) 5.
5. J.Milton, The Christian Doctrine trsl. J.Carey (New Haven, 1973) 117.
6. *Ibid.*, 120.
7. K.Svendsen, Milton and Science (Cambridge (Mass.), 1956).
8. Williams The Common Expositor 5.
9. I.MacCaffrey, Paradise Lost as Myth (Cambridge (Mass.), 1959) 22. Paradise Lost is 'not justification but presentation', MacCaffrey finds that 'In spite of token apologies scattered throughout the poem (...) Milton claimed (...) that he was actually depicting "things invisible to mortal sight"' (21). This thesis takes the 'token apologies' seriously and therefore sees 'justification' rather as re-presentation.
10. D.Bush, English Literature in the Early Seventeenth Century (Oxford, 1973) 74.
11. S.DuBartas, Divine Weeks and Works trsl. I.Sylvester, ed.S.Snyder (Oxford, 1979) Vol.I,189.
12. J.Milton, Selected Prose ed. C.A.Patrides (Harmondsworth, 1979) 393.
13. H.Grotius, Sacra (The Hague, 1601): 'Quantum mihi a Iuris studiis, historiis, & arte Civili otii datum est'.
14. 'Historia (...) prima'.
15. '(...) ex integro felicique statu in hanc miseriam'.
16. 'Metaphysica, de Deo, Angelis, & animis; (...) Physica etiam de rerum Creatione'.
17. 'Ita eisdem horis & pietatem exercui, & divinae humanaeq: Sapientiae studium, & Poesin'.
18. A similar comparative effort was made by Cowper, now with Andreini's poem. Cf. William Cowper, Cowper's Milton four

volumes (Chichester, 1810) Vol.I, essay on influences on Paradise Lost.

19. Adamus Exul of Grotius or the Prototype of Paradise Lost (London, 1839) 'Prolegomena', 6.

20. J.v.d.Vondel, Adam in Ballingschap, De Volledige Dichtwerken en Oorspronkelijk Proza ed.A.Verwey (Amsterdam,1937) 530-546; 533 :  
'daar ze treen, gekleed in witte zijde  
Van erfrechtvaardigheid, geslingerd om hun leen,  
En ook zo fijn van draad, dat door de zijde heen  
De schoonheid van het lijf uitschijnen kan, en gloeien'

21. 'Huic rei veniam aequus judex non negabit, quod, cum argumentum  
nactus sim quo nihil antiquius, nonnulla aut in comparationibus,  
aut alibi (...) per anticipationem dicta sint.'

22. Milton Christian Doctrine 133.

23. J.Milton, Paradise Lost ed J.Fowler (London, 1971). Fowler  
suggests that these were written in 1640.

24. F.Kermode, Sense of an Ending (London, 1966).

25. T.S.Eliot, 'Four Quartets,' Collected Poems (London, 1977)  
189-95; 193.

26. J.T.Shawcross, 'The Style and Genre of Paradise Lost,'  
New Essays on Paradise Lost ed Th. Kranidas (Los Angeles, 1969):  
15-33; for instance 21.  
G.M.Crump, The Mystical Design of Paradise Lost (London, 1975).  
B.M.Berry, Process of Speech (Baltimore, 1976).

27. S.E.Fish, 'Discovery as Form in Paradise Lost,' New Essays  
on Paradise Lost ed Th.Kranidas (Los Angeles, 1969): 1-14;  
2.

28. L.Martz, The Paradise Within (New Haven, 1967) 110.

29. N.Frye, Five Essays on Milton's Epics (London, 1966) 3.

30. D.F.Bouchard, Milton, a Structuralist Reading (London, 1974) 72.

31. J.M.Evans, Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition (Oxford,  
1968).

32. J.H.Adamson, 'The Creation,' Bright Essence eds J.B.Hunter et al.  
(Salt Lake City, 1971): 81-101; 93ff.

33. Fowler Milton's Paradise Lost note iii 658, p.185) quoting Empson,  
The Structure of Complex Words (1952) 103.

34. St.Augustine, Confessions trsl R.S.Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth,

1977) Book XI, 263.

35. W.G.Madsen, From Shadowy Types to Truth (New Haven, 1968) 140.

36. D.Saurat, Milton, Man and Thinker (London, 1924)

37. G.N.Conklin, Biblical Criticism and Heresy in Milton (New York, 1949).

38. Evans Genesis Tradition 221.

39. J.Schultz, Milton and Forbidden Knowledge (New York, 1955) 49.  
See also R.H.West, Milton and the Angels (Athens (Georgia), 1955).

40. R.H.West, 'The Names of Milton's Angels', SP, 1950 (XLVIII): 211-233.

41. Adamson 'The Creation' 101.

42. C.A.Patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford, 1966) respectively 33,36 and 42.

43. J.H.Adamson, 'The War in Heaven: the Merkabah,' Hunter et al. Bright Essence: 103ff.

44. Ch.Hill, Milton and the English Revolution (London, 1977) for instance 324 and 333.

45. T.C.Cave, The Cornucopian Text (Oxford, 1979).

46. R.Schwartz, 'Milton's Hostile Chaos'. ELH, Vol. 52, no.2 (Summer 1985): 337-75; 343.

47. For another reading of Paradise Lost which accords structural importance to the notion of difference see Bouchard Structuralist Reading for instance 115.

48. Evans Genesis Tradition 271.

Notes to Chapter four

1. H.Grabes, The Mutable Glass (Cambridge, 1982) 225.
2. Ibid., 3.
3. Ibid., 43.
4. Ibid., 78.
5. Ibid., 90.
6. Ibid., 83-84.
7. Ibid., 109.
8. A.Fowler, in Times Literary Supplement, August 19, 1983:  
872.
9. Grabes The Mutable Glass 226.
10. R.L.Colie, Parodoxia Epidemica (Princeton, 1966) 4-6.
11. J.Boehme, Morgenrote im Aufgangk (Aurora) (Amsterdam, 1656)  
373 -my translation of:

Hätten unsere Philosophi und Doctores nicht immer auff der  
Fiedel der Hoffart gegeiget/ Sondern auff der Propheten und  
Apostel Geigen/ es sollte wol eine andere Erkanntüss und Philosophia  
in der Welt sein. Darzu ich von wegen meiner Schwachheit und wenig  
studirens, darzu wegen meiner blöden Zungen fast zu wenig bin/  
aber in der Erkanntüss nicht zu einfältig. Allein ich kans nicht  
nach der tiefen Sprache und zierlichkeit geben/ aber ich lasse mir an  
meiner gabe genügen/ und bin ein Philosophus der Einfältigen.

12. J.A.Mazzeo, Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Studies (London, 1969) 1-28.
13. Ibid., 16-17.
14. G.B.Christopher, Milton and the Science of the Saints (Princeton, 1982) 3-4.
15. In C.A.Patrides, ed. The Cambridge Platonists (Cambridge, 1980) 56-57, Benjamin Whichcote, 'The Use of Reason in Matters of Religion', Sermon III.
16. Ibid., 6.
17. Ibid., 112; from R.Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached Before the House of Commons, March, 1647'.
18. Ibid., 17.
19. Ibid., 47; from B.Whichcote, 'The Use of Reason'.

20. Ibid., 130; from John Smith, 'The True Way and Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge' - 1660.
21. Henry More, Conjectura Cabbalistica (Cambridge, 1662) 'Defense of the Threefold Cabbala', 156.
22. Ibid., 184.
23. Patrides Cambridge Platonists, 70; from B.Whichcote, 'The Manifestation of Christ and the Deification of Man', Sermon III.
24. Ibid., 56; from B.Whichcote, 'The Use of Reason'.
25. Ibid., 207; from H.More, 'The Purification of a Christian Mans Soul', Discourse XIII, 1692.
26. Ibid., 98; from R.Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached Before the House of Commons'.
27. Ibid., 127.
28. Ibid., 59; B.Whichcote, 'The Use of Reason'.
29. Ibid., J.Smith, 'The True Way', 129.
30. Ibid., 131.
31. Grabes The Mutable Glass 85.

On the other hand, it is not only the mirror which functions as a figure of correspondence. DuBartas in his Divine Weekes and Workes (1605) brings together the notions of (respectively), a school, a pair of steps, a cloud, a stage, and a book, which all operate as metaphors for the world's valubleness in matters of education, spiritual ascent or in representation.

32. Patrides Cambridge Platonists 144; Smith, 'The True Way'.
33. Ibid., 212; More, 'The Purification'.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 208.
37. Ibid., 124; from Cudworth, 'A Sermon'.
38. Ibid., 108; Cudworth, 'A Sermon'.
39. Ibid.

This admiration of ancient Egyptian script did not end with the age of correspondence and plenitude. Ezra Pound's deep interest in Chinese character writing derives from very similar ideas about the nature of language. Cf. Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (London, 1975) for instance 192ff.

40. W.Wordsworth, 'Essay on Epitaphs III', in Wordsworth's Literary

Criticism ed. W.B.J.Owen (London, 1974) 154 (quoted by J.Culler, The Pursuit of Signs (London, 1981) 166:  
'If words be not an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely they will prove an ill gift; such a one as those poisoned vestments read of in the stories of superstitious times, which had power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on.'

41. Cf. J.Derrida, La Dissemination (Paris, 1972) 69-199, 'La pharmacie de Platon', especially 95ff (sections 3-4).
42. Patrides Cambridge Platonists 92; Cudworth, 'A Sermon'.
43. 1. J.W.H.Atkins, English Literary Criticism in the Renaissance (London, 1947) 344 & *passim*.  
2. J.E.Spingarn, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance (London, 1899) 261.
44. Cf. B.Weinberg, A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1961) especially Vol 2.
45. Michael Murrin, The Veil of Allegory (Chicago, 1969).  
Michael Murrin, The Allegorical Epic (Chicago, 1980).
46. Murrin The Veil 171.
47. Weinberg A History 248.
48. *Ibid.*, 799.
49. M.Foucault, The Order of Things trsl.? (London, 1970).
50. W.Pater, The Renaissance (1877) 'Pico della Mirandola' 37.
51. Grabes Mutable Glass 109-111. See also R.Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Oxford, 1980) 376:

'Sartre adds to our understanding of the visual imagery which has set the problems of Western philosophy by helping us see why this imagery is always trying to transcend itself. The notion of an unclouded mirror of Nature is the notion of a mirror which would be indistinguishable from what was mirrored, and this would not be a mirror at all. The notion of a human being whose mind is such an unclouded mirror, and who knows this, is the image, as Sartre says, of God. Such a being does not confront something alien which makes it necessary for him to choose an attitude toward, or a description of it. He would have no need and no ability to choose actions or descriptions.'

52. Peter Haidu, 'Repetition: Modern Reflections on Medieval

Aesthetics', MLN, Vol. 92, No.5 (Dec.1977); 875-888; see especially 878- 879. Quote from R.Javelet.

53. Murrin Allegorical Epic 49.
54. R.Tuve, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago, 1961) 25.
55. Spingarn History 131-132.
56. J.Dollimore, Radical Tragedy- Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries (Brighton, 1984) 74ff.
57. In the quotations following and until the end of the chapter, use has been made mainly of two standard editions of Renaissance English criticism. 1. G.G.Smith, Elizabethan Critical Essays, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1904). 2. J.E.Spingarn, Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1908). Reference from here on will be to either 'Smith' or 'Spingarn' with the appropriate page number. Puttenham's quotes are from the original. The reference for him is here, The Arte of English Poesie (London, 1589) 254-257.
58. Ibid. 225ff.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 2.
62. Ibid., 1.
63. Ibid.
64. Smith, vol.2; 197-198.
65. Ibid., 203.
66. Ibid., 200.
67. Ibid., 204.
68. Smith, vol 2; 367.
69. Th.Campion, Observations in the Art of English Poesie (London, 1602) Dedication.
70. Smith, vol.2; 371.
71. Ph.Sidney, An Apology for Poetry ed.G.Shepherd (Manchester, 1979) 45.
72. J.Derrida, Margins of Philosophy trsl. Alan Bass (Brighton, 1986) 103, n.33. Derrida uses the epithet of 'Kettle logic' to denote the logic behind arguments such as Sidney's here: 1.The Kettle I am returning is new. 2.The holes were already in it when you lent it to me. 3.You never lent me a kettle.

73. Smith, vol. 1, 156.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., 165.
77. Puttenham, The Arte 14.
78. Spingarn, vol.2; 7.
79. Spingarn, vol.1; 3 and 6.
80. Ibid., 44.

Notes to Chapter five

1. F.Bacon, The Advancement of Learning ed. A.Johnston (Oxford, 1974) Book II, 12, 'To the King', 65.
2. UCH, Tom.II, 1,a; 24: 'Monas generat monadem & in seipsum reflexit' (Hermes).
3. Rupture, break, seam, fault, flaw are all words used by R.BARTHES to describe 'the pleasure of the text'. The moment of 'the staging of an appearance as disappearance' (The Pleasure of the Text trsl. R.Miller (London, 1976) 10). Similar terms appear in Barthes' treatment of the art of photography in Camera Lucida trsl. R. Howard (London, 1982). The discontinuity always figures a transition from some form of muteness or silence to communication. Discontinuity, Barthes says in an essay written in 1962, is the fundamental status of all communication (cf. 'Literature and Discontinuity', in Critical Essays (Northwestern University Press, 1972)).
4. A.J.Festugière & A.D.Nock, Corpus Hermeticum (Paris, 1945) 'Poimandres', traite I, 14, p.11.
5. K.Burke, Language as Symbolic Action (Berkeley, 1966).
6. R.L.Colie, Paradoxia Epidemica (Princeton, 1966) especially Chapter 12, 374ff.
7. Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass and what Alice Saw there (London, 1872), 15:  
'...and I'm nearly sure they can't see me. I feel somehow as if I were invisible'. And indeed, on page 16, the White King 'took no notice of [Alice's] question: it was quite clear that he could neither hear her nor see her.'
8. H.C.Agrrippa, Three Books of Occult Philosophy trsl.J.F. (London, 1650) I, Chapt. LXI, 137.
9. R.Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy[1621] ed.Holbrook Jackson (London, 1978) 159-160.
10. Bacon Advancement Book II, 12, 1 -p.116.
11. UCH, Tom. II, 1,b -32.
12. M.Montaigne, Essays trsl. J.M.Cohen (Harmondsworth, 1975) 'On the Power of the Imagination', 36-48.
13. UCH, II,1,a -206-207.

14. Montaigne Essays 37-38.
15. Ibid., 39.
16. UCH, Tom.II,1,b -48-58.
17. K.Svendsen, Milton and Science (Cambridge (Mass.), 1956) 37; from La Primaudaye, The French Academie, 410, 414, 415 [Svendsen supplies no more specifications].
18. Aristotle, 'On the Art of Poetry' in Classical Literary Criticism ed. B.Radice, trsl. T.S.Dorsch (Harmondsworth, 1978) Chapter 9, 43.
19. F.Yates, The Art of Memory (London, 1966) 12.
20. Ibid., 339.
21. The question of the relation between Fludd's and similar (e.g. Lullian) systems on the one hand and, on the other ones developed later by psychology to 'plot' the mental entity memory was assumed to be, is fascinating but cannot be attempted here.
22. Yates' speculations about a possible reference here to the Globe Theatre seems to require heavy extrapolations. Dissimilarities between Fludd's theatre and the (hypothetical) looks of the Globe force her to speak of 'distortions of the real stage introduced for mnemonic purposes' (348)- and one wonders exactly whose purposes?
23. Bacon Advancement Book II, XV,2 -p.130.
24. Yates The Art 10-11.
25. E.Wind mentions the technique, in mystical writing, of leaving the text incomplete on purpose: 'giving a baffling account. patently incomplete, so that the reader may be induced to figure out the concealed part for himself' (Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance. (Oxford, 1980) 234).
26. M.Murfin, The Veil of Allegory (Chicago, 1969) 78.
27. I.G.MacCaffrey, 'The Theme of Paradise Lost Book III' in Th. Kranidas, ed., New Essays on Paradise Lost (Berkeley, 1969) 58-85.

Notes to Chapter six

1. The Major Works ed.C.A.Patrides (Harmondsworth, 1977) 136-137.
2. Christian Doctrine trsl John Carey (New Haven, 1973) 133-134.
3. Ibid., 117.
4. Ibid., 122.
5. G.Conklin, Biblical Criticism and Heresy in Milton (New York, 1944) 17-18 & passim.
6. M.I.Corcoran, Milton's Paradise Lost with Reference to the Hexameral Background (Washington DC, 1945). A.Williams, The Common Expositor (North Carolina, 1948). M.Kelley, 'Introduction' to Christian Doctrine (1973).
7. Conklin Biblical Criticism 33-34; 67; passim.
8. Christian Doctrine 133-134.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Joannis Miltonii Angli De Doctrina Christiana ed./trsl. Ch.R.Sumner (Cambridge, 1825) 12.
12. Christian Doctrine 136.
13. W.G.Madsen, From Shadowy Types to Truth (New Haven, 1968) 17.
14. T.C.Cave, The Cornucopian Text (Oxford, 1979) 90-91. Moreover, in an impressive recent study Sanford Budick introduces the concept of logos tomeus, the dividing logos, a traditional, possibly Philonic concept, the appearance of which in seventeenth century Protestant texts including Paradise Lost he demonstrates. The impact of this definition of the logos on the theory of representation is crucial and produces of course a very different reading than Madsen's of the issue here under consideration. The following quote illustrates Budick's approach:  
'The word is the iconoclast that divides the images of reality to produce an "imageless" dialectical ordering. Taken together, the agent, the activity, and the object of that activity are the divine images redeemed. For writers with such convictions, creating and recognizing that unique image can serve as a theological end'

itself'. (The Dividing Muse (New Haven, 1985) 68)

15. Genesis 3:8.

16. Genesis 11:1.

17. J.Dryden, The State of Innocence and the Fall of Man in The Complete Comedies, Tragedies & Operas (London, 1701) vol. II, 598.

18. Corcoran Milton's Paradise Lost 124-125.

19. J.M.Evans, Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition (Oxford, 1968) 271.

20. B.Rajan, Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader (London, 1947) 65.

21. R.Colie, Paradoxa Epidemica (Princeton, 1966) Chpt.5, especially 169-171.

22. M.Murrin, The Allegorical Epic (Chicago, 1980) 163.  
The language used for accomodation is often called 'anthropomorphic', that is, assuming the human form. Patrides has written about this and prefers the replace the term with 'anthropopathic'- 'after the manner of man' ('Paradise Lost and the Theory of Accomodation' Bright Essence ed. J.B.Hunter, et al. (Salt Lake City, 1971) 159-163). M.Roston (Milton and the Baroque (London, 1980) 87-89) thinks that Milton's use of anthropomorphism is 'far beyond the traditions sanctioned by Biblical usage, and at the same time far beyond the modifications necessary for adapting the celestial to mortal comprehension.' He associates this with an affinity between Milton and the Baroque which forms his central argument, and which finds in the excessive use of anthropomorphism a sign of 'celebration of the created world' 85). This has some familiarity with Martz's reference to the 'cheerful ways of men' (1980; see next note) concerning Milton's use of simile. The relations between these figural devices and notions of celebration are looked at in the concluding chapters of this dissertation.

23. L.Martz, Poet of Exile (New Haven, 1980) 90.

24. G.Hartman, 'Milton's Counterplot' ELH, Vol.25 (1958) 1-13.

25. M.Murrin Allegorical Epic 159.

26. J.Whaler, 'The Miltonic Simile' PMLA, 46 (1931), 1035-1037.

27. Janet Adelman, 'Creation and the Place of the Poet in Paradise Lost' in The Author and his Work ed.L.Martz (New Haven, 1978) 51-69.
28. L.Gregerson, 'The Limbs of Truth: Milton's Use of Simile in Paradise Lost' in Milton Studies XIV, 1980, 135-152; especially 137.
29. Ch.Ricks, Milton's Grand Style (Oxford, 1963) 127.
30. J.H.Adamson, 'The Creation' in Bright Essence ed. J.B.Hunter et al. (Salt Lake City, 1971) 81-101; especially 95.
31. Williams Expositor 209.
32. S.E.Fish, Surprised by Sin (London, 1967) 22-37.
33. Christian Doctrine 209.
34. For the famous substance-essence debate, see M.Kelley, This Great Argument (Gloucester (Mass.), 1962) and the same author's earlier mentioned Introduction to the Yale edition of the Christian Doctrine.
35. C.A.Patrides, 'Milton and the Trinity' in W.B.Hunter ed. Bright Essence 1-13.
36. J.H.Adamson, 'The Creation' in W.B.Hunter ed.Bright Essence.
37. Ch.Hill, Milton and the English Revolution (London, 1977) 295.
38. Cf. Isaiah XLV:15 (Vulgate): 'Vere tu es Deus absconditus' - a God 'considered as inaccessible to human cognition' (A Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases ed.A.J.Bliss (London, 1972) 'Deus Absconditus'). Lucien Goldmann (The Hidden God trsl. Ph.Thody (London, 1976) 36-37 and Chapters 1-3) uses the term in his description of Pascal's 'tragic vision'. This worldview, a reaction to rationalist-empiricist thought, Goldmann calls 'essentially a transitional phase' (34) because it responds positively to the rationalist-empiricist worldly reality as well as negatively, with a 'hope of reintegrating supra-individual values into this rational concept of space' (35). Pascal's thought, according to Goldmann, 'never says "Yes" or "No", but always "Yes" and "No". For Pascal the hidden God is both present and absent and not sometimes absent and sometimes present. He is always absent and always present.' (36). Such a notion of a transitional phase and the paradoxical idea that governs it is crucial in this thesis too. But the present

uses these in describing the change from the pre-modern to the scientific era, while Goldmann employs them to analyze the movement from modern (scientific) to dialectical thought.

39. Madsen, From Shadowy Types 77.
40. Cf. p.166 of this chapter.
41. Dionysius the Areopagite, quoted by Adamson 'The Creation' 93.
42. G.Pico della Mirandola, One Being and the One trsl.P.W.J.Miller (Indianapolis, 1965).
43. H.Vaughan, 'The Night' in The Complete Poems ed.P.Rudrum (New Haven) 1976.
44. M.Murfin, The Veil of Allegory (Chicago, 1969) 192.
45. Rajan Seventeenth Century Reader 23-29.
46. Ibid., 35ff.
47. Rajan's final opinion about Paradise Lost, it must be added, quite to the contrary, concerned the simplicity of its style; Ibid. 125.
48. G.B.Christopher, Milton and the Science of the Saints (Princeton, 1982) 105.
49. Ibid., 3-4.
50. Ibid., 60.
51. J.Milton, Areopagitica (London, 1644) 10.
52. Ibid., 23.
53. Ibid., 29.
54. Christian Doctrine 587.
55. Areopagitica 36.
56. Ibid., 32.
57. Augustine, Confessions trsl. R.Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, 1977) 308.
58. J.Webster, Academiarum Examen (London, 1653) 6.
59. Ibid., 8.
60. Ibid., 105.
61. Ibid.
62. Cf. for instance, Chapter V, 51.  
If Webster Knew Fludd's works and even chose them to exemplify the virtues of good education and liberal wisdom, could it be that Milton knew them too? There will be no safer way to settle this question than to find a direct reference by Milton himself to

prove his familiarity with Fludd's work, for as this thesis shows, the ideas inspiring Fludd were widespread and of such an eclectic nature that they might have been picked up from a number of sources. However, the existence of John Webster who Milton's coeval in more than that word's strict sense, and the former's enthusiasm about Fludd, add one more reason to believe that people in the poet's environment were acquainted with the principal texts of Christian Cabalism.

63. C.A.Patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford, 1966) 27.
64. H.C.Agrippa, Of the Vanitie and Uncertaintie of Artes and Sciences trsl. Ja.San. (London, 1569) 11.
65. J.Dryden, Religio Laici in the The Poems of John Dryden.4 Vols. ed.James Kinsley (Oxford, 1958) Vol.I, 302-323; p.318.
66. Conklin Biblical Criticism 13-15.
67. P.Haidu, 'Repetition: Modern Reflections on Medieval Aesthetics' MLN, Vol.92/No.5, 1977; 875-888.
68. Murrin Allegorical Epic 167; emphasis added.
69. A.Fowler, ed., Paradise Lost (London, 1971) 141, note iii (1-55).
70. D.Saurat, Milton et le materialisme chretien en Angleterre. (Paris, 1928) 69ff.
71. M.North, 'Expressing the Spirit: The Significance of Certain Repetitions in Paradise Lost' in Essays in Literature Vol.7, No.2, Fall 1980; 167-177; especially 168.
72. G.Bateson, 'Towards a Theory of Schizophrenia' in Steps to an Ecology of Mind (London, 1978) 173-199.
73. J.B.Broadbent, Some Graver Subject (London, 1967) 242.
74. H.Schultz, Milton and Forbidden Knowledge (New York, 1955). The characteristic interest in and adherence to both skepticism and stoicism in this period goes some way towards explaining its heightened preoccupation with 'natural philosophy' -Cf. Colie Paradoxa 398ff, especially p.403.
75. P.Kocher, Science and Religion in Elizabethan England (San Marino, 1953) 131.  
B.K.Lewalski, 'Innocence and Experience in Milton's Eden' in Th.Kranidas ed., New Essays on Paradise Lost (Los Angeles, 1969).

76. H.F.Robins, If This Be Heresy (Urbana, 1963) 10.

77. Marjory Curry Woods, 'Milton's Interpretation of Genesis: a Note on the Structure of Books VII & VIII of Paradise Lost' in Notes and Queries, 1981; 28 (226) -3; p.205-207.

78. H.F.Fletcher, Milton's Rabbinical Readings (New York, 1967) 303.

79. Broadbent Some Graver Subject 238.

80. Fletcher Rabbinical Readings; especially 123ff.

81. Patrides Christian Tradition 129-130.

82. Williams Expositor 51.

83. John Donne, The Works 6 vols. ed. Henry Alford (London, 1839) Sermon XCV (Vol.IV, 221-222). Donne indeed uses a tripartite division of 'God's works' (221) but his terms are 'creation', 'specification and disposing', and finally 'conservation'. The last category does not quite correspond with Williams' 'ornamentation'. Donne defines it as follows:  
'And then, the conservation of all these [i.e. the 'several kinds', beasts, fowl, fish. plants, etc.] in that order in which they are first created, and then distinguished, the administration of these creatures by a constant working of second causes, which naturally produce their effects...' Donne's categories serve more than a rhetorical purpose, they represent three decreasingly difficult steps in God's work. Creation ex nihilo is much harder than, finally, the conservation of what thus has been created. And this all is to prove that 'restitution by resurrection [is] easier [sic] of all'.

84. Heninger described this concept of creation in detail and Klibansky provides an iconological survey of the motif of the Holy Geometer with his compasses and scales, in Christian imagery.

a. S.K.Heninger, Touches of Sweet Harmony (San Marino, 1974) 209.

b. R.Klibansky, Saturn and Melancholy (London, 1964) 338-340.

85. C.A.Patrides, 'Milton on the Trinity' in J.Hunter ed. Bright Essence (Salt Lake City, 1971) 1-13.

86. Barthes' recurrent preoccupation with 'rupture' in the process of reading (cf. Camera Lucida trsl Richard Howard (London, 1982) 80; The Pleasure of the Text trsl Richard Miller (London,

1976); Writing Degree Zero. Trsl. ? (London, 1967) is that meaning is produced as the interaction of such discontinuities with the normal, linear flow of the text. Cf. E.Said, Beginnings (New York, 1975) especially Introduction, on our habits of linear reading.

87. Ch.J.Shirley Jr. 'The Four Phases of the Creation: Milton's Use of Accommodation in Paradise Lost VII' in South Atlantic Bulletin, Vol.XLV, No.2, May 1980; 51-61; especially 52.

Notes to Chapter seven

1. A.O.Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge (Mass.), 1936) 86.
2. 'La pharmacie de Platon' in La Dissémination. (Paris, 1972) 71-196.
3. For the 'self-conscious pluralistic' allegorical text, see M. Quilligan, The Language of Allegory (Ithaca, 1979) 28.
4. E.Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (Oxford, 1980) 218.
5. J.A.Mazzeo, Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Studies (London, 1969) 1-28.
6. J.W.H.Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance (London, 1947) 18-19. P.O.Kristeller, Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters (Rome, 1956) 227.
7. D.Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism (Toronto, 1939) e.g. 54 & *passim*.
8. Ch.Webster, The Great Instauration (London, 1975).
9. P.J.French, John Dee (London, 1972) 12.
10. For a few examples of Dee and Kelley's puzzled reaction see Relation, p.5, with questions like 'How is this to be used?' and 'We know not how to number her name in our letters.' And, p. 93:  
'E.K. [Edward Kelley]: As concerning the power, What is it?  
Gab. [Gabriel, a spirit]: ...What it is, that it is, for the  
knowledge of it may lead you to error.'  
△ [Deel]: This answer offended greatly E.K. & thereupon he left  
off, and would receive no more at their hands.'
11. Book II, 11.
12. 1
13. *Ibid.*
14. 24 & 26
15. 51.
16. Cf. Robert West, Milton and the Angels (Athens (Georgia), 1955) 12.
17. This all taken from the title of the above book.
18. J.Webster The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft (London, 1677) 19.

19. Ibid., 184.
20. Ibid., 9.
21. Ibid., 268.
22. Ibid., 18.
23. Ibid., 340.
24. Ibid., 8.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. M.Casaubon A True and Faithful Relation (London, 1659)  
4.
28. Webster The Displaying 32.
29. a. D.P.Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella (London, 1958).  
b. K.Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (Harmondsworth, 1973).
30. M.Casaubon Of Credulity and Incredulity in things Divine and Spiritual (London, 1670) 4.
31. Ibid., 1-15.
32. Ibid., 109.
33. Ibid., 198-199.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Webster The Displaying Chapter III, 37.
37. Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy ed.Holbrook Jackson (London, 1978) I, 2,3 -p.256.
38. Webster The Displaying 324.
39. Ibid., 328.
40. Burton Anatomy III, 4,1 -p.351-52.
41. Casaubon Relation 'Preface', unpaginated.
42. Sir Th.Browne, Religio Medici ed. C.A.Patrideres (Harmondsworth, 1977) 91.
43. H.C.Arianna, Three Books of Occult Philosophy trsl. J.F. (London, 1651) 'To the Reader', unpaginated.
44. Ibid., 555-556.
45. Clavis Philosophiae (Frankfurt, 1633) 11.
46. Ibid., 46.
47. J.Boehme, Aurora (Gorlitz, 1612/Amsterdam, 1656) 607.

48. John Wilson, The Cheats (1662) ed. Milton C.Nahm (Oxford, 1935).
49. Ibid., 157, Fol.110v; especially 134ff.
50. Cf. for instance Theomagia (London, 1663-64) Book I, 189 -- H.More, Conjectura Cabbalistica (London, 1662 (2nd ed.)) 16-17; and Theomagia, Book III, 193 -- Conjectura, 22.
51. Heydon Theomagia III, 188.
52. J.Heydon, The Harmony of the World (London, 1662) Preface, unpaginated [xxiii, verso]
53. E.Holmes, Henry Vaughan (Oxford, 1932) 43. The reference is to a letter to Aubrey on p.672 of the Collected Works ed. L.Martin (1914).
54. Pico della Mirandola, On the Dignity of Man (1487) trsl. Ch. Wallis (Indianapolis, 1965) 28.
55. DED, 'Secretary of Nature' -Three Proper Letters. B iiib.
56. Cf. H.Rapaport, Milton and the Postmodern (Lincoln, 1983) 25.
57. N.Cusa, Of Learned Ignorance trsl. Germain Heron (London, 1954) 54.
58. Theologia Platonica ed R.Marcel (Paris, 1964). 2 Vols.
59. Ibid., 224/ Lib.XIII, Chpt.iii, Vt 2.
60. Ibid., 223.
61. J.Dee, 'Mathematicall Preface' to Euclides Elements of Geometry. trsl. H.Billingsley (London, 1570) Fol.19v.
62. Ficino Theologia Vol.II, 199/Lib.XIII, Cpt. i.
63. Ibid., 199/Lib.XIII, Cpt.i.
64. B.Vickers' understanding of Ficino's magical use of words exemplifies how Ficino's caution with them is often ignored in favour of his famous expressions about this occult power. He, again, finds support in Kristeller's conclusion that in Ficino "symbolism loses the form of a metaphor" and becomes identified with "the divine truth and goodness". Cf. B.Vickers (ed.), Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance (Cambridge, 1986) 120.
65. Ibid., Vol.I, 87-88/Lib.II, Cpt.vi.
66. Ibid.
67. E.N.Tigerstedt, 'The Poet as Creator, Origins of a Metaphor' in Comparative Literature Studies, 5 (1968); 455-488.
68. Ibid., 475.
69. Ibid., 472.
70. 'Sidney and Milton: the Poet as Maker' in J.A.Wittreich (ed.),

Milton and the Line of Vision (Wisconsin, 1975) 82.

Touches of Sweet Harmony (San Marino, 1974) 391.

71. Touches 364.

72. The Cosmographical Glass (San Marino, 1977) 81.

73. J.A.Mazzeo, 'Metaphysical Poetry and the Poetic of Correspondence'  
J.Hist.of Ideas, Vol.14 (1953) 221-234.

74. Touches 299.

75. M.Murrin, The Veil of Allegory (Chicago, 1969).

76. Ibid., 197.

77. H.Rapaport Milton and the Postmodern (Lincoln, 1983).

78. Wind Paqan Mysteries 70.

79. Ch.Trinkaus, In Our Image and Likeness (London, 1970) Vol 2, 482.

80. Ibid., 484.

81. Ibid., 689.

82. W.J.Ong, Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue (Cambridge (Mass.), 1958).

83. G.S.DuBartas, Divine Weeks and Works trsl. I.Sylvester ed.  
S.Snyder (Oxford, 1979) Vol.I 115 & Vol.I, 141.

84. T.Traherne, Poems ed. A Ridler (Oxford, 1966) xvii.

85. R.L.Colie, Paradoxa Epidemica. (Princeton, 1966) 151.

86. L.Martz, The Paradise Within (New Haven, 1964).

87. Ridler 'Introduction', xviii.

88. Martz Paradise 48.

89. 1st Century; 167.

90. Ibid., 189.

91. 2nd Century, 221.

92. 1st Century, 169.

93. 2nd Century, 263.

94. Ibid., 264.

95. Ibid., 267.

96. Ibid., 282.

97. Ibid., 283.

98. Ibid., 271.

99. 4th Century, 326.

100. Ibid.

101. 1st Century, 182-183.

102. Ibid.

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103.375-389; especially 381.

104.353.

Notes to Chapter eight

1. 'A Critique on the Paradise Lost' in Paradise Lost ed. Thomas Newton (London, 1750) vol.I, sig. 10v.
2. Cf. R. Durling, The Figure of the Poet in the Renaissance Epic (Boston, 1965).
3. Though this thesis differs on the whole, it agrees with Sundell and Ferry that the invocations somewhat concern the 'inventions of a narrative voice'. R.H. Sundell, 'The Singer and his Song in the Prologues of Paradise Lost' in J. Max Patrick & R.H. Sundell (eds.), Milton and the Art of Sacred Song (Madison (Wisconsin), 1979) 65-83; especially 65-63.
4. Ludovico Ariosto, Orlando Furioso trsl. Guido Waldman (Oxford, 1983) Canto I; 1-4.
5. Utriusque Cosmi Historia. Tom. II, 1, a; Cap. VIII, 140ff.
6. J. Adelman, 'Creation and the Place of the Poet in Paradise Lost'. in L. Martz (ed.), The Author and his Work (New Haven, 1978) 51-60; especially 56, note 8.
7. Sir Philip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester, 1973) 98 and 96.
8. Catherine Belsey, John Milton - Language, Gender and Power (Oxford, 1988) 21.
9. D. Daiches, 'The Opening of Paradise Lost' in F. Kermode (ed.) The Living Milton (London, 1960) 55-69; especially 61.
10. Christian Doctrine trsl. John Carey (New Haven, 1973) 572.
11. For convenience's sake this many titled presence will be referred to by its first name, Heavenly Muse.
12. Walter Pater, The Renaissance (London, 1877) 37.
13. Possibly these places and functions stand in some (parallel) relation to the respective books at whose beginnings they appear. With the change from the two first infernal books to the books presided over by the second invocation, and with Satan's journey to earth, the poet invokes in less exclusively biblical terms (as if -once he leaves the scene of Hell- he can be less strict in these matters), and (moving down to the human world) he becomes more personal. The last invocation (Book IX) is appropriately curt in

tone ('no more of talk' -line 1) and actually lacks a vital trait of the invocation proper by not initially addressing the spiritual presence: in Book IX the fall and its consequences are introduced. Structural significance can be found, moreover, in the way that the invocations divide the poem into two times six books, the first half dealing with the fall of the angels and the second with the fall of man. Cf. Milton's Paradise Lost ed. Alastair Fowler (London, 1971) Note IX, 1-47. A consideration of the first edition's four-part structure can yield numerological meanings.

14. Adelman 'Creation' 55-56.

15. Fowler Paradise Lost IX, 21-24.

16. A distinction should be made between the secretarial 'difference' and Derrida's deconstructive 'differance' which Derrida's own words illustrate well:

'And yet those aspects of "difference" which are delineated are not theological, not even in the order of the most negative of negative theologies, which are always concerned with disengaging a superessentiality beyond the finite categories of essence and existence (...) and always hastening to recall that God is refused the predicate of existence, only to acknowledge his superior, inconceivable, and ineffable mode of being.' In Margins of Philosophy trsl Alan Bass (Brighton, 1986) 6.

17. L. Martz, The Paradise Within (New Haven, 1964) 105-106.

18. S. Fish, 'Discovery as Form in Paradise Lost' in Th. Kranidas (ed.) New Essays on Paradise Lost (Berkeley, 1969) 2. . .

19. Ibid., p.9.

20. Blindness and Insight (London, 1983) 187-229.

21. Ibid., 218.

22. Ibid., 220.

23. Cf. Belsey John Milton 83, who, like others, does not associate the new interiority with this ironic selfconsciousness and sees it, instead as a resort to the notion of single authoritative truth. Nevertheless, Belsey's reading of such notions differs significantly from more unambivalent ones: she sees Paradise Lost as a site of struggle between powers, divine and human, where triumph cannot anymore be easily ascribed to one side or another. Warren Chernaik, on the other hand, in his work on Marvell, appears to find in

Milton's work an ironic consciousness of human limitations similar to Marvell's but sees this, in the former's case, being superseded by the poet's attempt to justify God's ways to man. (Warren L. Chernaik, The Poet's Time (Cambridge, 1983) 18-20.

24. Edition I (1667): BM C14a9

Edition II(1674): BM 124e17.

25. De Man Blindness 207.

26. See Christian Doctrine note 1, 521.

27. Ibid., 525-526.

28. Ibid., 587.

29. Ibid., 589.

30. H.Rapaport, Milton and the Postmodern (Nebraska, 1983) 44.

In his recent seminal work on Milton's concept of the logos-divider, Sanford Budick writes the following:

'In Paradise Lost the acceptance of loss, the reconciliation to the necessary deficits in the totality of perception and knowledge functions as a subjective correlative to the division of the selfsacrificing logos.' And: '...in Milton's poem acknowledgement of loss is integrated into the fullest, most circumstantial consciousness of reality.' (The Dividing Muse (New Haven, 1985) 70 & 72 respectively)

31. L.Martz, Poet of Exile (New Haven, 1980) 88.

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James their reigne) and some spirits. Preface M. Casaubon.  
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