

Milton, Marvell and the Cause of the Earth in Restoration Polemics, 1667-1677

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Introduction¹

From one perspective, John Milton (1608-1674), Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) and the Puritan divine John Oxenbridge (1608-1674) can be seen to embody three types of Dissenting response to the Stuart Restoration (1660-1688).² While both Milton and Oxenbridge refused to comply with the Act of Uniformity in 1662, they chose to pay the price of nonconformity differently. Milton, despite his political expulsion, stayed in England to 'groan and travail in pain' (Romans 8.22) under the persecuting regime, publishing *Paradise Lost* in 1667. In that same year, Oxenbridge left England for Barbados and subsequently Massachusetts. Experiencing positive faith in colonial freedom, Oxenbridge preached to propagate the gospel as well as enjoyed the service of black servants. Unlike both of these nonconformists, Marvell successfully reinvented himself as a public persona after his 1659 election as MP for Hull. At the outset, Marvell seemed to have a genuine hope in the promise of civil and religious tolerance made by Charles II in the 1660 Declaration of Breda. 'The young king was no bigot,' John Coffey notes, 'and he recognised the need to attract a broad range of support' (166). Marvell's audacious defence of Milton during the indemnity debates can be understood as a part of his wider defence of toleration (in line with Charles II's awareness of the pragmatic need for reconciliation) rather than as a straightforward apology for Milton's politics.

Against those who regard Marvell as a political opportunist,³ I suggest that he had a serious political agenda for stabilizing the constitution of the English state, an agenda which grounds the extreme sophistication of his satirical style. It is true that his political belief is equipped with the new pragmatism that grew up with the dissemination of the Machiavellian-Hobbesian 'reason of state' theory, empowered by the development of international commerce. But Marvell's negative construction of religious and political liberty is still rich with aesthetic weight that cannot be found, for example, in the liberalism of John Locke's political theory or in the wit of Jonathan Swift's brutal satire. Marvell, however, failed tragically to steer the Leviathan ship through contemporary tempests aggravated by the rhetoric of Puritan subversion and the Popish plot.⁴

I

Now, let us begin by recapping the course of events after 1660. Within a year, the conciliatory mood created by the royal promise of peace dramatically ended after 'the breakdown of negotiations between Presbyterians and Episcopalians at the Savoy Conference and the election of a new "Cavalier" Parliament in the spring of 1661' (Spurr 145). Up to 1665, the 'arbitrary government' consolidated its authoritarian judicature in the four legal statutes subsequently known as the 'Clarendon Code'. The reaction of the Cavalier parliament (especially the 1662 Act of Uniformity) produced a new juridical

¹ This paper is based on a part of the third chapter of my Ph.D. dissertation, *The City and the Problem of Labour in Milton's Samson Agonistes* (University of Exeter, 2011): 130-147.

² Their factual biographical details (e.g., dates) are taken, unless otherwise indicated, from the articles in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* by Michael P. Winship on Oxenbridge, W. H. Kelliher on Marvell and Gordon Campbell on Milton.

³ In early modern England, political opportunism was associated with Machiavelli, as Marvell was referred to in James Scudamore's letter as 'a notable English Italo-Machiavellian' (Ray, 101). Lawrence W. Hyman in *Andrew Marvell* (1964) encapsulates the view: 'It might be simpler and ultimately less confusing if we were to concede that Marvell was an opportunist in the sense that he sifted his political position whenever he felt it necessary to do so to secure the kind of government he wanted' (cited in Wallace, 145).

⁴ On the English fear of 'the Popish Plot' after the Restoration, see Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660-1688* (1973); Clifton, 'Fear of Popery' (1973); Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (1983).

category of 'Dissent', understood in negative terms as 'all those who did *not* worship in the Church of England' (Spurr 149). According to historian John Spurr, 'Dissenters' includes separatists and sectaries, Quakers, Baptists, Independents and Presbyterians, who had nothing in common '[e]xcept perhaps for resentment at the category' (150). This persecution was temporarily sidetracked as Charles II 'with hopes of commercial gains' declared war against the Dutch Republic on 4 March 1665, the same year that plague killed 70,000 in London and the Great Fire of London destroyed 13,000 houses and 87 churches (Spurr 155). As Marvell makes clear in his satiric poem *The Last Instructions to a Painter* (September 1667), the unsuccessful naval war of Charles II against Calvinist republicans clearly impinged upon domestic politics in this season of discontent, which resulted in the scapegoating of Clarendon, who was forced into exile.

Published in 1671, Milton's *Samson Agonistes* was composed under the complex legal circumstances that followed these numerous political disturbances after 1667.⁵ I would go so far as to suggest that the post-war debates on the constitution of state are reflected in the dark political language of the tragedy. More precisely, the target of *Samson Agonistes* is, in addition to the persecuting regime, Milton's former fellows who chose to pursue their politics *within* the secularist constitution of state, where 'contending faiths might agree to disagree, or even turn a blind eye on each other, with religion increasingly construed as a private practice' (von Maltzahn 86). For Milton, religious liberty detached from the political realm must corrupt the very content of positive value for which civil liberty is instrumental. Indeed, for Milton, 'private religion' was a contradiction in terms:

As for tolerating the exercise of their Religion, supposing their State activities not to be dangerous, I answer, that Toleration is either public or private; and the exercise of their Religion, as far as it is Idolatrous, can be tolerated neither way (*Of True Religion*, CPW 8: 430)

The profound ambiguity of *Samson Agonistes* can be accounted for by its concern with the civil construction of liberty under a modern arbitrary government. I suggest that *Samson Agonistes* embodies Milton's compassionate critique of Marvellian negative liberty after 1660, warning against the peril of reliance on the sublime language of 'dressing' the Cause of the English soil.

Accordingly, my reading pushes the dating of the drama's composition to the period from 1667 to 1671, coinciding with the beginning of the constitutional debates initiated by John Humfrey's *A Proposition for the Safety & Happiness of the King and Kingdom both in Church and State* (1667), soon accompanied by John Corbet's *Discourse of the Religion of England* (1667).⁶ As the fear of radical plots subsided, the influence of the 'Cabal' – Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Anthony Ashley Cooper (later first Earl of Shaftesbury, the patron of John Locke) and Lauderdale – seemed successfully to work on 'a more lenient policy toward Dissent' (Coffey 171). Many Nonconformists and sympathizers such as John Owen, Richard Baxter, Sir Charles Wolseley, Thomas Tomkins, Richard Perrinchief and Herbert Thorndike argued cogently for the 'liberty of conscience', by discussing the nature of 'indulgence' (relief of legal penalties for those outside the Church of England) and 'comprehension' (the terms and conditions of conformity to the Church of England) (Dzelzainis and Patterson 5-6). Orchestrated by Archbishop Gilbert Sheldon, the opposition found Simon Patrick and Samuel Parker promoting statutes against Dissent. From 1669 to 1670, Parker composed three authoritarian polemics: *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*, *The Mischiefs and Inconveniences of Toleration are Represented*, and *A Defence and Continuation of the Ecclesiastical Politie*.

Reminding us of the ferment out of which sprang Milton's anti-prelatical tracts of early 1640s, the debates centred upon the *religious* constitution of the state. But Protestant understanding of an institutionalized religion after 1660 was deeply affected and even corrupted by the two emerging languages of commerce and Roman Catholicism (or at least *fear* of Roman

⁵ I share the view of Blair Worden, who has convincingly demonstrated the relatedness of the play to the Restoration ('Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, and the Restoration').

⁶ For the detailed context of Marvell's controversy with Parker and a more comprehensive list of the relevant tracts, see the introduction by Dzelzainis and Patterson in *The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell, Volume I: 1672-1673* (2003): 4-22.

Catholicism). When the restored monarch issued a Declaration of Indulgence on 15 March 1672, its sublime language of religious toleration was not exclusively spoken as a consolation for Dissenters. It was a measure implemented, to a significant degree, by the external 'necessity' of the Third Dutch War, which began just two days after the Declaration (Spurr 158). The constitution of the body politic can be sustained only when its financial nourishment is secure. What complicates the link between international war and domestic toleration is that Charles II's war against the Dutch Republic was carried out in alliance with his cousin Louis XIV of France, with whom he concluded the secret Treaty of Dover in 1670, promising that Charles would receive an annual subsidy for his alliance and 'a subsidy of £150,000 and the aid of troops when Charles announced his conversion to Roman Catholicism and reintroduced that religion to England: the timing of this supposed conversion was left deliberately vague and it is impossible to say just how serious Charles was about the plan' (Spurr 158). For those who wanted to doubt Charles's intent, there were plenty of reasons to do so: his wife, Catherine of Braganza, his mother, Henrietta Maria, his royal mistresses and the heir to his throne, James II, were all Catholic.

Conferring the same 'indulgence' to the antagonistic factions, Protestant Dissenters and Catholics, both of which stood outside the Church of England, Charles II ended up intensifying their difference under that 'loose' juridical category. Many radical Nonconformists 'were uneasy at sharing indulgence with Catholics' (Dzelzainis and Patterson 9); it was a 'cause of grief that papists and atheists enjoy so much liberty [under the Indulgence]' (qtd. in Spurr 158). This royal extension of toleration to Catholics and Charles II's unconstitutional manner of 'Declaration' upset parliamentarians, even those who were sympathetic towards his policy. As Charles II exhausted funds on the futile war, the Parliament forced him to cancel the Indulgence in March 1673 and enact the Test Act, 'requiring all office-holders to take the oath of Allegiance, receive the Anglican sacrament and renounce the pernicious doctrine of transubstantiation. No, the bread did not really become the body of Christ, nor the wine his blood' (Forsyth 210).

During the period from 1660 to 1688, English constitutional parliamentarism struggled to find ways to come to terms with the novel instrumentality of the monarch. The division of labour between executive and legislative power was far from clear, and on many occasions had to be negotiated through the king's need for financing his abortive wars against the Protestant Dutch Republic. The regicide of 30 January 1649 left a lasting impression of kingship's impermanence (or, more concretely, of the king's mortality) on the English people, provoking a fundamental revision of the relationship between the constitution of state and the Crown. The two major components of the ongoing crisis – (1) the fear of Puritan subversion that caused the Civil War and (2) the reactionary jurisdictions of Laud, Clarendon and Sheldon that produced radical Dissent – could dissolve only into a deeper apocalyptic obsession with a 'Popish Plot', confirming the national union's need for a 'public enemy'. The anti-papery works of English tolerationists such as Milton, Owen, William Penn, Locke and even Marvell, reveal the limits of the Protestant theory of toleration. In the heated political argument led by the Earl of Shaftesbury against the Earl of Danby in 1675-77, 'popery' signified 'any threat to the Erastian foundation of English Protestantism, to the Reformation achieved by Parliament and monarch' (Spurr 160). After the dissolution of the Cavalier parliament in 1679, Protestant Dissenters enjoyed some relief but at the expense of the Catholic community. Drawing on the 'darker side of liberalism', Richard Ashcraft notes that the Whig campaign for toleration of Protestant Dissenters relied upon 'a set of specific prejudices, erroneous beliefs, and an attitude fed more by conspiratorial fear than rational judgement' (196). John Coffey suggests that at the heart of the internalized tensions in Whig ideology lies the fact that 'Protestant tolerationism had its roots in anti-papery and anti-clericalism – persecution had been identified as a hallmark of the popish Antichrist' (186).

II

It is, therefore, necessary to take into account the underlying tensions outlined above if we wish to understand in full the extreme subtlety and complexity of the controversy of 1672-73 that followed the royal

Declaration of Indulgence. It was then that Marvell reveals his divergence from Milton's positive conception of liberty. First, let us note that the complexity evolved in part from Marvell's unique political stance and the structural convolution of his two-part *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1672, 1673). What Isaac Disraeli in *Quarrels of Authors* (1814) called the 'pen-combats' between Samuel Parker and Marvell were haunted by the political legacy of Milton, in whose house they first came to know each other in 1662.⁷ The structure of Marvell's attack against a former fellow, now a zealous conformist was borrowed from *The Rehearsal* (performed in 1671) by George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham, whose object of satire was the popular heroic drama of John Dryden. Marvell's consequential coalescing of two characters, Parker and Dryden, in the persona of 'Bayes' helped to register him as the pupil of Milton, both politically and aesthetically. Dryden's adaptation of *Paradise Lost* into a drama in 'jingling' rhyme, *The State of Innocence* (1677), encapsulates the imitator's uncouth manner of appropriation (he was said to 'tagge' Milton's verses) as well as the fundamental difference in their aesthetics.⁸

The rhetorical scheme of a *Posse Archidiaconatus*, as Marvell mockingly called Parker and his supporters, was 'quick to collapse any distinction between the two', between Marvell and the notorious Milton (von Maltzahn 89). Richard Leigh in *The Transproser Rehears'd: or the Fifth Act of Mr. Bayes's Play* (1673) criticized Marvell for plagiarizing Milton's prose style, in recalling that Marvell might have called Parker 'Bayes Anonymus in imitation of Miltons learned Bull (for that Bulls in Latin are learned ones, none will deny) who in his Answer to *Salmasius*, calls him *Claudius Anonymus*' (31). Leigh went so far as to reduce Marvell and Milton to 'these two loathsome Beasts' (35). Many of Marvell's opponents attacked him as if he were assuming the person of Milton, perhaps even especially when he was being Marvell himself, whose poetics was formed under the influence (rather than in imitation) of his close and towering predecessor. Edmund Hickerlingil, writing in 1673, claimed that Marvell 'gives the *Good Old Cause*, a

good new name, and because the old one is odious, he calls it sometimes Primitive Simplicity, sometimes modern Orthodoxy, and ... the Cause too good' (41).

Despite his opponents' campaign, Marvell's prose style enjoyed a fair degree of success in circumventing his association with Milton. Roger Palmer, the Catholic Earl of Castlemanine, praised the author of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* at the expense of Milton, who published *Of True Religion* in 1673, assuming that the scope of Marvell's toleration was extendable to his Roman Catholicism. With slight changes, the censor Roger L'Estrange gave a license to a second issue of Marvell's *Rehearsal* upon Charles II's good opinion of it: 'Parker has done him wrong, and this man has done him Right' (qtd. in Kelliher, 'Marvell' *ODNB*). In contrast to Milton's high style, Nicholas von Maltzahn characterizes Marvell's prose as 'a coffee-house style of "à-la-mode raillery" more alert to competing interests, and backed by a Hobbesian conception that politics and even religion were interest-driven and in need of sovereign administration'; his religious allegiance can be traced to 'a moderate Presbyterianism of the kind associated with the major moderate of the day, Richard Baxter, which in the Restoration sought Comprehension in a national church, this in disagreement with the Independents who insisted on a wider toleration' (90-91). Drawing on the works of Jürgen Habermas and Steven Pincus, Joanna Picciotto has investigated the Restoration culture of innocent curiosity within the 'constitutive conflicts of intellectual identity [which] ... played out in competing models of public space' from the traditional court, the church, the theatre and the alehouse to the laboratory, the curiosity cabinet and the coffeehouse, arguing that the growing number of coffeehouses provided the public a polite space 'in which disagreement did not lead ineluctably to violence' (258, 305). By 1663, London alone saw over eighty coffeehouses opened in many major streets; the number exceeded 2,000 by the end of the century.

The satirical language of Restoration polemics, extensively exploiting the theatrical language of *as if*, dissociates the polemicists' ostensible stance from the real object of their critiques. For example, Marvell's

⁷ For a more detailed account of Milton's haunting presence in the Restoration aesthetics, see Achinstein, 'Milton's Specter in the Restoration: Marvell, Dryden, and Literary Enthusiasm' (1997).

⁸ On the literary rivalry of Dryden with Milton, see Zwicker, 'Milton, Dryden, and the Politics of Literary Controversy' (1995).

defence of the royal Declaration of Indulgence did not defend Charles II's turning to 'popery', which might have been the king's ulterior will, while Parker's rejection of toleration was written in order to reinforce the state's hold over religious issues.⁹ Including Charles II himself, the proponents and opponents of Indulgence did not *mean* what they were saying but their statements were crafted to cause the influence they intended. Broadly speaking, the styles of Restoration polemics does not *name* their true opponents, or rather they *unname* their antagonists: 'I may henceforth indifferently call him Mr. Bayes ... because he hath no Name, or at least will not own it, though he himself writes under the greatest security, and gives us the first Letters of other Mens Names before he be asked them' (Marvell, *Rehearsal* 51). This strategy allows them to disembodied their own value judgements so that the concrete location of enmity is unrecognizable. This is in sharp contrast to Milton's partisan style of naming and embodying his opponents, whereby Milton makes the process of argumentation more interactive.

Martin Dzelzainis and Annabel Patterson note that Marvell appears to 'have been free' from the Miltonic pre-Restoration partisan style (19). This sense of 'freedom' emerges in *The Rehearsal's* introduction of 'wit and fantasy into an arena in which brute intellectual force was hitherto dominant, [which] had transformed the rules of the discursive game' (Dzelzainis and Patterson 21). In this manner, the political action of Milton's age is 'sublimated' into satirical acting and playing, which aspire simply to be effective in the political realm of a post-war England. To this theatrical language, employed by Marvell to discuss the new constitution of state, Milton implicitly and critically responds in *Samson Agonistes*, in which Samson's critique of the Philistine

regime culminates in the tragic destruction of their 'spacious theatre' (*SA* 1605).

By this assertion, I do not of course mean to say that Milton responded *specially* to Marvell's controversy with Parker, which took place after the publication of *Samson Agonistes*; as shown above, these debates on the constitution of state had been ongoing since 1667 and therefore, from one point of view, 'Marvell was just a late contributor' (Dzelzainis and Patterson 8). I would also contend that the public service of Samson (as a productive slave and entertainer), whose inward sufferings can be more straightforwardly identified with those of Milton himself, seems to resonate with (rather than derive from) the public service of Marvell in 1660-73, owing to Milton's own post-Restoration estrangement from public life. In other words, Marvell was acting the role Milton might have played if his physical and political circumstances had permitted. Neil Forsyth points out that, in 1673, when Milton wrote *Of True Religion*, he 'makes plain that he takes a different line from Marvell, who had welcomed the Declaration of Indulgence and ignored the Catholic issue' (212). This attack against secular authority was in turn rephrased by Marvell in *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England*, published in late 1677 as his early contribution to the Exclusion Bill Crisis of 1678-1681.¹⁰

III

The difference between Milton's positive liberty and Marvell's negative liberty appears more evident when we examine their attitudes towards the Good Old Cause. Marvell's divergence from Milton is registered in their different ideas of labour: Milton 'tills' the cause strenuously whereas Marvell 'dresses' it in his wit.¹¹ In *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio* (1651),

⁹ Samuel Parker's grand thesis of absolutism – a king, who secures the 'peace' of the state, 'should be vested with a Power to govern and conduct the Consciences of Subjects in affairs of Religion' (91-92, emphasis in original) – sounds very much akin to the absolutism of Salmasius in the *Defensio regia pro Carolo I* (1649), who 'defines a king ... as one whose power is supreme in the kingdom and responsible to none but God, one who may do as he will and is not subject to the laws' (qtd. by Milton in *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, *CPW* 4: 340). The notable difference is that Parker's king should be able to dictate even the psychic space of his subjects.

¹⁰ The ultimate link to the Exclusion Bill Crisis is significant since John Locke, according to Peter Laslett in the introduction to his edition, wrote his *Two Treatises of Government* (in which Locke asserts his conception of labour has precedent over Robert Filmer's idea of hereditary authority) during the Exclusion Crisis, although it was eventually published in 1689. Simply put, the political purpose of Locke's *Two Treatises* is twofold: one is to avert Catholic James II from taking the throne and the other is, as expressed in the 'Preface', to justify the new office of William III of Orange-Nassau from the Protestant Dutch Republic (1688).

¹¹ The contrast of the words—'till' and 'dress'—is biblical: whereas, in the Authorised Version Bible, God puts Adam in the Garden of Eden 'to dress it and keep it' (Gen. 2.15), Milton's God says to Adam, 'This Paradise I give thee, count it thine to till and keep' (*PL*. 8.319-20). Here the poet carefully introduces the rural term 'till', instead of the word 'dress'—the civil covering of the natural body—and, in so doing, emphasizes the strenuous bodily exertion in itself constitutes the creational (thus unfallen) human condition.

Milton answers to those who wondered why it took him so long to reply to Salmasius: 'if I had been granted leisure and strength enough for writing it would have been no long laborious task to find words and arguments for the defence of a cause so just' (*CPW* 4: 307). It was clear for Milton that a cause of the English people and reformed religion must be defended against the royal cause through strenuous justification. Milton was indeed commissioned to write a defence but he was not 'hired' like Salmasius (*CPW* 4: 308). Later in his *Defensio Secunda* (1654), Milton found himself in raptures whenever his mind 'dwell[s] upon this cause, the noblest and most renowned of all, and upon the glorious task of defending the very defenders, a task assigned me by their own vote and decision' (*CPW* 4: 554). Milton appears to oppose the Machiavellian conception of reason of state when he declares that 'a cause is neither proved good by success, nor shown to be evil. We insist, not that our cause be judged by the outcome, but that the outcome be judged by the cause' (*Defensio Secunda*, *CPW* 4: 652).

In clear contrast to Milton's cultivation of the cause, the basic tenor of Marvell's *The Rehearsal* is simple: leave alone (neither persecute like Laud, Clarendon and Parker nor encourage like Milton) radical religious Nonconformists such as Arminians, whose cause Marvell transposes to a mechanical process of raw nature.

Whether it were a War of Religion, or of Liberty, is *not worth the labour* to enquire. Which-soever was at the top, the other was at the bottom; but upon considering all, I think the Cause was too good to have been fought for... For men may spare their pains where Nature is at *work*. (*Rehearsal* 192, emphasis added)

Here Marvell removes all sense of labouring from the semantics of the term 'work', thereby reducing nature to an insensitive mechanism. In effect, Marvell releases natural law from the justice of divine law. At a glance, this Marvellian call for toleration may appear similar to Milton's notion of patience: 'PATIENCE is the endurance of evils and injuries' (*De Doctrina*, *CPW* 6: 730; cf. *SA* 654, 1287-1300 or *PR* 3.92). In Book 9 of *Paradise Lost*, however,

Milton's depiction of Nature empathizes with the pain of Nature in labour, giving birth to Original Sin:

Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
In pangs, and nature gave a second groan,
Sky loured, and, muttering thunder, some sad
 drops
Wept at completing of the mortal sin
Original (1000-1004)

This is the same earth to which Milton addresses, in *The Readie and Easie Way*, his final political plea. Corrupted by the mercantile rhetoric of self-preservation and national prosperity, 'her perverse inhabitants' have become deaf, unable to understand the language of the Good Old Cause:

What I have spoken, is the language of that which is not call'd amiss *the good Old Cause*: if it seem strange to any, it will not seem more strange, I hope, then convincing to backsliders. Thus much I should perhaps have said though I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones; and had none to cry to, but with the Prophet, *O earth, earth, earth!* to tell the very soil it self, what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to. (*CPW* 7: 462-63)

The difference in politics as well as poetics between Milton and Marvell may be found vividly in their differing representations of nature: the one groaning in pain, the other working tirelessly without feeling. As briefly touched on above, 'groaning' in Milton signifies a profane juridical condition of defeat, that is, 'the tyrannie which we then ground under' (*CPW* 7: 423). Earlier in *Eikonoklastes* (1649), to counter the royalist claim for kings '*being the greatest Patrons of Law, Justice, Order, and Religion on Earth*', Milton observes that 'the earth it self hath too long groan'd under the burd'n of thir injustice, disorder, and irreligion' (*CPW* 3: 598). It is the pain caused by the crisis of the public realm in the Restoration – the crisis evolving from the mercantile discourse of national prosperity that contaminated communication by forgetting the Good Old Cause of the Earth that fulfils its justice by rewarding 'the living labours of publick men' (*Areopagitica*, *CPW* 2: 493).

Milton's juxtaposition of the Good Old Cause and the Earth is indeed deliberate, for it evokes his memorable defence of his link to the soil in *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*. Against Salmasius's patrician sneer – 'the Manii, sons of the soil, not even noble in their own country or known to their own kinsmen, thought these matters theirs to decide' – Milton dignifies, instead of denying, his fellow republicans' relatedness to the English soil (*CPW* 4: 319). He argues that 'true nobility' resides in 'self-made men' who have merit 'through toil and rectitude'. Unlike the cosmopolitan Salmasius, they are 'called sons of the soil, provided it be their own, and exert themselves at home, [rather] than suffering hunger in a foreign land as slave to the whim or purse of a master, and live as you do—a merchant of hot air, a homeless, houseless, worthless man of straw' (*CPW* 4: 319). Like Salmasius, Marvell also embraces this fundamental 'homelessness' of Restoration literature, while Milton endeavours to preserve the Good Old Cause of the English soil even if it means a form of groaning pain.

Such a cosmic advent of pain under coercion is also represented in *Samson Agonistes*. The Chorus describe the commotion that follows the destruction of the Philistine temple, which is Samson's realization of his 'rouzing motion' (*SA* 1382):

Noise call you it or universal groan
As if the whole inhabitation perished,
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point. (*SA* 1511-14)

As a matter of fact, 'the *whole* inhabitation' does *not* perish and the 'universal groan' does not emanate from Nature as in *Paradise Lost*. It is merely a secular mimesis of the original Fall; the cosmic groan of the wounded earth has subsided here into the all-too-human 'outcry' of rather pitiful enemies (*SA* 1517). The pain of the catastrophe is presented to Manoa as a report by the Messenger, which works to distance the event. The cosmic pain of nature in *Paradise Lost* is internalized in Samson's mind:

O that torment should not be confined
To the body's wounds and sores

With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, breast, and reins;
But must secret passage find
To the inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense,
Though void of corporeal sense. (*SA* 606-16)

Samson proceeds to describe his fall as a medical problem: 'My griefs not only pain me / As a lingering disease, / But finding no redress, ... Dire inflammation which no cooling herb / Or med'cinal liquor can assuage' (*SA* 617-20, 626-27). This amounts to melancholy: 'Thence fainting, swoopings of despair, / And sense of heaven's desertion' (*SA* 631-32). Reminding us of Adam's 'nature [that may have] failed in me' before 'the charm of beauty's powerful glance' (*PL* 8.534), Samson also undergoes a kind of dissociation from nature, feeling

my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat, nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself (*SA* 594-96)

The Chorus even describe his heroic strength as something that 'might have subdued the earth' (*SA* 174), recalling God's command in Genesis 1.28: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it'. Is Milton pointing to the absence of the groaning earth in Restoration discourse?

This seems likely when we observe Milton's judicious displacement of the earth that is present in the 'pure cause' of the Lady's virginity in *A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle* (1634). The Lady warns Comus that the strength of her sacred virginity would shake the pillars of his mercantile rhetoric of exchange:

Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and
shake,
Till all thy magic structures reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

(792-98)

The Messenger's depiction of Samson's final act substitutes 'the brute Earth' for 'mountains' and in so doing, registers the male hero's distance from the earth mother whose support the Lady is able to count on.

As with the force of winds and waters pent,
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro
He tugged, he shook, till down thy came and drew
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder
Upon the heads of all who sate beneath (*SA* 1647-52)

Unlike the Lady, Samson acts alone, making mountains tremble and tragically killing his 'foes in number more / Than all [his] life had slain before' (*SA* 1667-68).

Indeed the familiar identification of Samson with Milton groaning under the Restoration yoke cannot be dismissed and is convincing to a significant extent. As I will demonstrate, however, Samson departs from Milton precisely when we equate them; this is the case, too, with an association between Milton and Marvell after the Restoration. Indeed, to read *Samson Agonistes* alongside *The Rehearsal* is to perceive that the distance between Samson and Milton is parallel to the difference between Marvell and Milton after 1660.

To the Body's complaint in *A Dialogue between the Soul and Body*,¹² 'O who shall me deliver whole, / From bonds of this tyrannic soul? ... [soul] Has made me live to let me die. / A body that could never rest, / Since this ill spirit it possessed' (11-12, 18-20), Marvell's Soul can only respond as follows:

O who shall, from this dungeon, raise
A soul enslaved so many ways?
With bolts of bones, that fettered stands
In feet; and manacled in hands.
Here blinded with an eye; and there
Deaf with the drumming of an ear.

A soul hung up, as 'twere, in chains
Of nerves, and arteries, and veins.
Tortured, besides each other part,
In a vain head, and double heart. ...
What magic, could me thus confine
Within another's grief to pine?
Where whatsoever it complain,
I feel, that cannot feel, the pain. (1-10, 21-24)

Marvell's Soul does 'feel...the pain', but only insofar as it may insert 'that cannot feel' in-between. For Marvell's Soul, 'cure' from painful life – that is, the restoration of peace under the monarch – appears to be worse than wound itself (25-28); Marvell's English boat after the Restoration is

ready oft the port to gain,
Am shipwrecked into health again. (29-30)

The Restoration cure was surgical, failing to recover the nation from the fundamental strife that caused the Civil War. Nevertheless, it is only through the painful confession of inability to feel Milton's pain that Marvell can be related to the Good Old Cause on its deathbed: 'I feel, that cannot feel, the pain'.

In his commendatory poem 'On Mr Milton's *Paradise Lost*' (1674), we witness Marvell's subtle turning of his view on the blind republican bard. The epic's arguments

Held me a while misdoubting his intent,
That he would ruin (for I saw him strong)
The sacred truths to fable and old song
(So Samson groped the Temple's post in spite)
The world o'erwhelming to revenge his sight. ...
But I am now convinced, and none will dare
Within thy labours to pretend a share. (6-10, 25-26)

Throughout the poem, we find free confessional tones which are otherwise rare in Marvell's complex theatrical style ('I liked his project' or 'Jealous I was' or 'Pardon me, mighty poet, nor despise / My

¹² Nigel Smith dates this poem to 1652, while noting that 'the strong echoes of the poem in the prose works of the 1670s [43-44] ... give some support for a late date of composition, or revision' (Marvell, *PAM* 61).

causeless, yet not impious, surmise' [12, 18, 23-24]). Even his acclaimed ironic eyes do not seem to stop valuing the worth of Milton's labour on its own terms, for 'no room is here for writers left, / But to detect their ignorance or theft' (29-30). Marvell had to revise his assumption that defeated Milton in his old age, like Samson, must be revengeful. But if Milton is *not* Samson (as Marvell himself discerns), who is the Samson whom Milton so vividly describes in *Samson Agonistes*? Did Marvell ever imagine his own observation to fall back on himself? In any case, Samson seems most Marvellian when he adapts a language of mind-body dualism, that is, when he asserts his 'mastery in fooling' the Philistines; in one view, Samson (by extension Marvell after 1660) volunteers to be killed by the dualist language he puts to use for his cause. *Samson Agonistes* may register the poet's tragic vision of the Restoration culture.

Conclusion

Marvell's post-war politics of pain and trauma ('I feel, that cannot feel, the pain') was his utmost endeavour to reach out to the 'feelings' of his greatest predecessor, Milton. Milton's *Samson*, however, realises a post-war *Trauerarbeit* (mourning-work) by burying the Marvellian dualist language under the groaning pain of Nature that reveals itself only in the tragic vision of self-sacrifice and violence. This vision, which includes Marvell's self-sacrifice, is indeed inaccessible to Marvell himself. Marvell, like blind Samson, cannot see what he is delivering precisely because the dualist language he adopts initiates the mode of modernity within which Milton's political vocation is strictly censored and thus cannot be re-called. Modernity, to realize its full form, may need to sacrifice those who fail to detach their own roots in the 'Good Old Cause', while it is also true to say that modernity, in its founding act of detachment, may have left intact the seeds of radical critique.

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