Home is behind them, forever unattainable, and in some sense they know it.

The backward pull begins to blend with other concepts of escape, of which the most frequently imagined in epic poetry are gardens or garden-worlds, suicide, and madness. Distinct enough in definition, and in some of their manifestations, nevertheless, because they all represent inaction, passivity, and at times oblivion, they do sometimes overlap one another in the poetry. The most frequent and obvious device by which the hero is tempted to forget his mortality is some variation on the enchanted garden. Whether pre-Christian or Christian, this garden is almost always a reminder that you cannot go home again, whether "home" is taken to be as historical as Vergil's Troy, or as psychological as the retreat to a pre-conscious formless condition. The word "garden" is here used generically, to define a place of timeless enchantment that conflicts with the hero's actual mission. There are no literal gardens in pre-Christian epics, although one might include in this category such places as Little Troy and Scheria. Christian literature, too, contains some non-garden gardens, artificial substitutes for Calypso's cave, the most entertaining being the magic dome by which Ariosto's Atlantes tries to preserve Rogero from mortality.

These gardens are often destroyed, by extraneous forces, or intentionally, by the characters themselves. Meliboe's country is despoiled by brigands, Atlantes' dome by unillusioned Astolpho. Critics have frequently complained of Guyon's Puritan zeal in his destruction of the Bower of Bliss. Such violence, which is apt to seem excessive, is nevertheless in proportion to the complex ambiguous reference of these gardens to the beginnings of the race, the lost homes of the heroes, and the transcendent goals that all seek. The garden may be longed for as ideal, yet knowledge that he is still in mid-journey makes the hero look upon any apparent oasis with mixed feelings, as a shelter from reality. Occasional pastoral idylls do exist, fragile, doomed, and, for the hero, escapist, like Phaeacia and the country of Meliboe. As for the future and transcendent world, the unattainable city of Jerusalem is viewed by St. George from afar. Only Dante is allowed to enter its gardens, and he must leave them behind, half forgetting the reality, in order to use language to describe it. It is good that there is at least once in epic story a record of that process, the near-speechlessness of the attainment set across from the inarticulate formlessness of the original cave.

At its best the garden in epic keeps before the hero a vision of his true purpose, and briefly grants him refreshment and inspiration. At worst, it can menace his human-ity, and his existence, as it does in the Bower of Bliss. When it is a snare cast by the forces of darkness, it much resembles man's threatened vision of the original cave, its effects resemble those of suicide and madness, and their near relation to one another shows us why the garden can be so sinister. Most epic heroes consider suicide or fall into madness, especially at crucial times in their lives, when they are being asked to deny what seems dearest to them, to take on an impossible task, and, often simultaneously, to realize that they are only human. Overwhelmed by his own inadequacy, Redcrosse wants to destroy himself rather than run the risk of more mortal behavior. Everyone who reads Book 1 of the Faerie Queene notices how emotionally compelling are the arguments of Despair in com-
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parison to the rest of the narrative. This character, who scarcely exists outside his own argument, collects and distills into quintessential debate all conceivable reasons for wanting to die, until he is practically unanswerable.

By acting out a false suicide, Ariosto’s Ariodantes gets what he wants, the untainted love of Genevra that he had to begin with. Suicide, or the ritual of it, at best can lead to a new beginning—after all, it has never been clear where suicide leaves off and martyrdom begins. The idea of death to self is compatible with the necessary acceptance of mortality, and Dante is shown as having utterly to re-sign his old self, to endure a kind of death by fire, in order to achieve Paradise. That effort to achieve a higher consciousness, although different from the suicide that is damnation and the end of everything, resembles it enough to give suicide, like the false garden, a kind of ambiguity. At certain times it is enormously attractive, and so comes to be regarded with both longing and repulsion. In the classical epics, although no particular moral obloquy attaches to suicide, it appears to be something that women do; it is not for the hero to let himself die with Troy. Christianity makes it the worst kind of sin, unending destruction of the self, as Dante shows in his seventh circle. An act of violence itself, but a compelling one, it has to be violently rejected.

Different as they seem, the garden, suicide, and madness all offer chosen oblivion. Maneuvered to Alcina’s island by Atlantes, who wishes the safety of his ward above his honor, Rogero equates beauty with goodness and falls under her spell into a life of forgetful ease, far from the confused battles that characterize proper knighthood. Suicide is rejection of the role for which the hero is needed and the unknown perils to which he must expose himself. Madness is a kind of suicide of the mind, protecting Orlando from self-knowledge, and destructive both of himself and of those unfortunate enough to stand in his way. The moon, as Ariosto’s repository of lost things, including sanity, signifies the universality of human madness, the difficulty with which self-consciousness is maintained.

Each of these routes involves a kind of crazy hope; otherwise it would not be so compelling. The garden reminds people of Eden or the Golden World. Suicide, phoenixlike, can contain a new beginning. And madness has always figured a higher sanity. In epic tradition such possibilities are minimally realized, but they are there at least to tease and to deceive. Paradise, death to self, the babblings of a soothsayer, all show that the way of negation, rightly held, is a way of life. More predictably, however, the garden, suicide, and madness offer oblivion, an impossible attempt to go back to the original state of unconsciousness. And violence attaches to them, in the attainment of them as goals, in staying with them, and in escaping from them.

Finally rejecting all these alternatives, the hero accepts consciousness, and, eventually, self-consciousness. In order to be heroic, he must be mortal and aware of his mortality; that awareness involves or is involved in the achievement of consciousness. A sense of mortality pervades the mode of tragedy, too, of course, and some epics are tragic. But although the two kinds of heroism may coincide, the emphasis is likely to be quite different. The tragic hero almost always finds that his destiny, that which makes him a hero, and his death are inextricably com-
There is a kind of defiance in his choice of doom. For the epic hero, it is enough simply to accept the fact that he will have to die sometime, and to run the risk of death by choosing his destiny. The way in which his life is played out determines the particular shading the epic receives—comic, tragic, romantic, ironic, or some combination of these. Although I suppose one might call the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid* tragic, because in them death is so pervasive, none of the poems in Milton's tradition is tragic in the way of *Oedipus* or of *King Lear*. At its most extreme, the difference is that between Ishmael and Ahab, Britomart and the Duchess of Malfi, Adam and Hamlet.

The epic hero lives to tell his story. He is less terrible and more canny than his tragic counterpart. Believing that life, even with knowledge of death, is important and worthwhile, he commits himself to staying alive and mortal in this world, doing his worldly tasks in the time he is given.

Discovery and acceptance of his own nature and place in life are the role of any human being; the magnitude of his undertaking determines his heroism. Aeneas' helmsman Palinurus is heroic in his refusal to give in to sleep naturally; he fights the god Morpheus until he is knocked overboard with the helm still in hand; his insistence on his duty is what makes him a worthy sacrifice and keeps the ship on course even after his death. Dido and Turnus, blind during life to their fate, finally see and accept what has become of them, and thus gain a measure of heroism at the end. A steadily increasing consciousness marks Dante's progress from Hell to Purgatory and Paradise. Hell's residents are blind, confined in boxes, drowning in lakes; those of Paradise are bounded only by themselves, knowing and fulfilled within their own limits. To be heroic it may be necessary to be larger than other men, but the epic also celebrates these minor characters who are wholly themselves.

But how to become oneself? The desire for intellectual and spiritual experience characterizes the epic hero. Inexperienced Telemachus, at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, is sent out to get news of his father primarily in order to learn something about the world, so that he can become his father's son. Odysseus obviously has spent time getting experience for its own sake. Explaining how Dante, alive, comes to be in Hell, Vergil says that "to give him full experience I, who am dead, must bring him down here" (*Inferno*, 28.48–49). Yet the insatiable desire for experience is also what puts Ulysses into the eighth bolgia of Dante's eighth circle, and it is what makes his story so moving:

"O brothers," I said, "who through a hundred thousand perils have reached the west, to this so brief vigil of the senses that remains to us choose not to deny experience, in the sun's track, of the unpeopled world. . . . You were not born to live as brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge." [*26.112–20*]

The desire for knowledge has its own perils, always. But moral reservations about this quest only emerge with Christianity, when excessive experience begins to seem as dangerous as too little. The very things that give a hero his epic stature make it likely that he will overstep his limits and try to take heaven by storm before he knows his own nature, valuing power and knowledge more than wisdom.

The desire for experience contributes to the conflict, in the tradition, between community and isolation. It has
usually been assumed that the hero's values are communal, that he acts not for himself but on behalf of his people. Yet in major episodes of almost every epic the hero is not in his community, but somewhere else. Sometimes, it is true, he has fallen prey to temptation, although even temptation eventually proves instructive. Major spiritual experiences, such as the visit to the underworld, are frequently solitary. The hero wants more than the others do; he pushes back the boundaries of consciousness on their behalf insofar as they represent humanity, but not necessarily for them in relation to their immediate interests or well-being. Without Achilles, Odysseus, Rinaldo, or Redcrosse, wars cannot be won and kingdoms saved, but none of them comes to the rescue with all possible speed. They are doing more important and crucial things, without which they could accomplish nothing.

Accomplishment, in fact, is not judged solely, or even primarily, by what we think of as epic action. Action, of some kind, is going to occur, one way or another; what is important is the “fit” between the mind and the action, between the individual and the community. The hero lives both in time and out of it, both in himself and in his given world. Supposedly he rejects senseless isolation for purposeful community, although often community is only valuable as an end in itself and not for the common cause that holds it together. In the Iliad men knowingly and enduringly join in an unjust war. Hector, who dislikes fighting as much as anyone, regrets that he must die, because he will not have time to teach his son to carry a spear. The shield of Aeneas enables him to carry on his shoulders the fortunes of the race. To some extent, community atones for mortality. If a man cannot live forever, perhaps mankind can, and participation even in the bloodiest warfare can then assure an individual's place in human history.

On the other hand, the hero is given considerable reason to question the merit and even the existence of historical continuity, especially on any level that can be personally meaningful to him. Achilles is strikingly isolated from his companions; almost no appeals to family or tribal loyalty can touch him. Throughout his poem, Aeneas is systematically deprived of almost everyone who has been important to him. Dante the character is soon to go into perpetual exile. The exaggeratedly episodic, fragmentary organization of Orlando Furioso is intended to demonstrate life's incoherence, the difficulty of achieving and maintaining any central purpose. The personal lives of these people are always at odds with their lives as soldiers, and matter to them much more than the battle of Paris does. Yet, badly or well, sooner or later the hero comes back and does what he has to do.

He is isolated from others by his superior skills, by his destiny, and by his knowledge. He is a target for others' envy, even when his position is to him unenviable. Who would choose to be Achilles or Rinaldo? He is asked, at a moment's notice, to end relationships that have meant much, as Aeneas must, or to learn, like Dante, that an old friend and guide is condemned to eternal pain in the Inferno. He is isolated by the fact that he is in progress and cannot attach himself to any community along the way or confuse his needs with theirs. Sometimes he can tell his destination only negatively: this is not it.

It is often difficult for the reader to like him, since the hero's needs require him to seem inhuman at times.
Odysses uses his men as bait; Dante kicks a former acquaintance in the face; the parting of Aeneas and Dido is notorious. It is ordinarily impossible for the hero to cultivate kindness or generosity; although he is capable of these, he must also be prepared to turn away from all human bonds. But even if he seems at times to be denying the immediate for the sake of the remote, and the personal for the theoretical, that is not the whole story either. Many of the great moments of epic occur when an immediate rush of feeling takes on inevitability: it is countenanced or even required in the scheme of things, and personal and abstract come together. The point is that the hero must be open to everything, not closed in by his own limitations and personal expectations or commitments.

Both meetings and partings in epic tend to have this kind of wonderful inevitability because they are especially likely to involve mission, historical necessity, heavenly decree. The characters themselves are aware of the rightness of what is happening to them, and, when it is pleasurable, the pleasure is thus made particularly intense. The meeting of Britomart and Artegall is such a necessary and yet spontaneous moment; others are the meetings of Dante and Vergil, and Dante and Beatrice. Turnus bitterly accepts his death as right and so underlines for us the whole course of his life in the poem as right and even as heroic. On the other hand, the best of Hector's life as hero is recognized and embraced by him at a moment when he joyfully recognizes his military prowess and wishes that the gods would always so bless him.

Epic describes the process in which human beings are involved, and, within that process, their relationships to themselves, each other, and their goals. The specified goals are likely to be remote, unsatisfactory, or even unattainable. Their relationships are undependable, and almost arbitrarily denied. There exists only a human community, held together by a temporal purpose that may never be realized, by its common humanity, and by a seldom expressed but ever-present longing for a wholeness that can somehow transcend the mortal state. The hero has to be free of definition, and at the same time submissive to needs that the community itself may not know it has. Dante's community (aside from the heavenly city) is an Italy that he himself created.

While the epic characters always change the world in which they live, they also in some way accept it, not necessarily ideologically but existentially. They do not always either believe or disbelieve in the common cause, but they have no way of creating a different context except by living out their extended awareness within their given world. They are called, and they choose to be what they are, and by choosing create their freedom. Their acceptance of themselves makes possible the "tragic joy" so strongly felt in Homer's poems, the love of sensuous detail, even of the instruments of warfare, the joyous capacity to eat, sleep, or make love in the intervals between battles. Ariosto's robust cynicism has the same impetus: nothing matters, in a way, and human beings are all lost; yet their existential capacity for freedom is endless, and is exceeded only by the reader's (and the writer's) enjoyment of the human spectacle.

What matters is the individual's fulfillment within the terms he is given; the terms themselves cannot be changed. Hector has to teach his son to throw a spear if he wants
the boy to grow up; Achilles has to rejoin the war if he wants a place among men. That is, one has to accept death if he wants to live. But if that means that one has to live in history, it also means that recognition of history, and mortality, makes one free. History—a perceived pattern of sequential action—is the form that western man has chosen for human existence. Yet objective acknowledgment of that form—seeing it for what it is—is freedom from it. Because history is permeated with mortality, it cannot hold anyone's entire loyalty or existence.

The epic hero, then, is a person with godlike longings or capabilities, who must paradoxically accept his limitations and his limited context in order to be heroic. He is aware of his need to fulfill himself in a limited place and time, even though he may not entirely understand or believe in his given mission. He confronts in himself the caves and dark woods that have always been human symbols of formlessness, ignorance, and unconsciousness, and often of darkness, sexuality, evil, and danger. He is aware of, and prey to, violence, even though (or perhaps because) he may be the most conscious, controlled man of his time. Because of his self-awareness and his commitment to particular goals, he is vulnerable to calls from the opposite extreme—to indulge in sensual delight, to die, to retreat into madness. He is always won back to the community and group endeavor, even though he often has no particular commitment to them. He participates uneasily in human affairs, rejecting any ties that would require him to ally himself permanently with something finished; he is in process. In some way, he works for and represents his people, but the value of his or their goal is uncertain and his movements as portrayed in the poem may seem destructive. He forces a way for people to a new dimension of awareness. He belongs to a community committed to history and freed from history by death, learning the way out of time by awareness of time.

5. Separation and the Search for Transcendence

But Man by number is to manifest
His single imperfection, and beget
Like of his like, his Image multipli'd,
In unitie defective, which requires
Collateral love, and dearest amitie.

[8.422–26]

The achievement, use, and transcendence of self-consciousness is not only definitive of epic; it is a central characteristic of western art, directly related to the myth of the fall. Perhaps all myths of Paradise refer to the earliest stage of human development, when there is no division into conscious and unconscious worlds, and no loneliness because no sense of self. With self-consciousness come suffering, the knowledge of separateness, and a sense of loss and guilt. The formation of self proceeds by recognition of negatives (I am not that) and opposites. We have seen how this process seems to involve an association of the unconscious mind with passions and desires that can annihilate the self if insufficiently controlled. The traditional prescription for this human condition is to find the virtues of its defects, acquiring a fuller kind of aware-
ness that, as Milton would have it, can by means of education “repair the ruins of our first Parents.” The story of every epic is that of the hero allowing himself to accept definition as a mortal being, exposing himself to all the knowledge and dangers and suffering that humanity brings, and then learning to transcend his own definition. Epic also invites the reader to self-discovery, not only by means of the hero’s story, but in the form of the poem itself, which by nature and genealogy is what it teaches.

The wholeness toward which an epic education leads the hero is as far beyond discursive reason as the original wholeness is below it. As that original state has so often been associated with danger and evil, it is particularly needful to have a symbol or symbols for positive satisfactions that also have to be associated with the unconscious mind because they are not entirely accessible to ordinary awareness. The most familiar embracing symbol for this condition is of course Heaven, but it is also familiar as an earthly state of transcendental awareness. The means by which the hero is specifically prepared to reach this kind of fulfillment are all interwoven with the earthly experiences by which he reconciles himself with his mortality. His quest is a paradox, for unless he accepts the fact that he is mortal, he cannot learn to transcend himself. He acquires both self-knowledge and self-transcendence through a wide variety of reflecting images. He is educated in self and in otherness by seeing himself, his twin, his opposite, his false self, his other half, or, finally, his whole transcendent being brought near to him in art, and in many different kinds of encounters with other people. Passing beyond mortal comprehension as it does, this education is dangerous: evil adheres to it, and deceits which play upon ordinary understanding. The stubborn self-defining intelligence that raised the mind above the level of the cave is still needed, but it is inadequate defense against deceptions that depend on human reason for their effectiveness. To pass beyond illusion the hero must have recourse to the very unconscious forces which he had to surpass in order to become heroic. If this requires self-abandonment, that does not mean self-loss, but rather a gradual erasing of the limits of consciousness on the boundary between self and other.

Epics are full of episodes containing art within art, in which the contained art reflects or interprets the larger meaning. Beginning with Achilles, the characters sing their own exploits. They find their deeds recorded in many kinds of art—Juno’s shrine in Carthage; the pictures on shields; the tapestry into which Helen weaves the story of Troy; the funeral games of the Trojans at the death of Anchises. Rinaldo is made to confront his own image in an adamantine shield; the history of Portuguese deeds is portrayed in banners on their flagship; Britomart and Arthur read their own histories. The technique functions first of all to create, restore, or increase self-consciousness, enabling people to see themselves as others do and describe themselves as they would like to be seen.

Epic teaches us that art as we know it requires the acceptance or experience of mortality. It needs that kind of definition and boundaries. That is the lesson we learn when, for example, Odysseus, after renouncing immortality with Calypso, is able to sing his own adventures and hear them sung. On Calypso’s island, he was almost indefinable apart from her—a shadowy, tearful, impotent
figure. In Scheria, he stands out in clear relief, as a very mortal and temporary visitor. Tears accompany his effort to break from Calypso into consciousness, and they accompany art in the epic as well: he weeps in Scheria when his tale is told. Looking at the story of Troy on the walls of Juno’s shrine, Aeneas exclaims, “There are tears for passing thing; here, too, things mortal touch the mind” (1.462). The art of the funeral game is directly inspired by death, distancing mortality by playing at it.

Art is a way to achieve immortality in worldly terms, since it outlives its authors. It has also frequently been used as a moral instrument. In Dante’s Purgatorio, the penitent are constantly made more fully aware of their condition by means of quotations, pictures, dream-visions, and songs inciting them to a better life, in which they themselves will become art. Characters asked to read their own histories are given scripts by which to live. And patrons to whom the poems are dedicated are being asked to know themselves better. Queen Elizabeth, “mirror of grace and majestic divine” (proem, stanza 4), is shown many other mirrors of herself in the Faerie Queene, some more favorable than others. The proems show that she is the inspiration, the content, and the intended pupil of the epic.

Art can create distance, necessary for self-awareness. Also necessary for self-awareness is the splitting off of opposites from unity, the creation of heaven and earth, day and night, subject and object, male and female, good and evil, innocence and guilt, “I” and “you.” As consciousness increases, so does human isolation, but the isolation makes possible relatedness, the means by which divisions (which made self-consciousness possible) are to be healed. Self-consciousness is its own disease and its own cure.

At every stage a mistaken kind of self-love is easy. Because it is better than self-hatred, it seems desirable, and there is a feeling of wholeness about it too. Self-consciousness is often described as the ability to see oneself as in a mirror, distinct. But the myth of Narcissus shows the danger: in love with himself, he is lost in his own image. Looking into Armida’s eyes, Rinaldo sees her and falls into a state of static enchantment; looking into his eyes, she sees herself: the narcissistic person ruins herself and those around her. Others mirror us; we mirror ourselves. Without such help, there is no self-knowledge. The problem with human relationships is identical to that of man’s desire to be godlike. Homer’s gods are less godlike than his heroes. Self-knowledge cannot exist without relationships, which cannot exist without separation. The difficulty is to overcome the separation without being annihilated.

Epics are full of pairings, mirrorings, coincidence of opposites, all of which bewilders, instruct, deceive, destroy, and save. A standard kind of relationship is provided by the convention of guest-friendship, which ranges from simple entertainment to a very complex mutuality. Almost never is it only a means to help the traveler on his way. Rather, the ways in which host and guest reflect and illuminate one another’s experience can be decisive in their lives. They study one another or involve themselves with one another with a peculiar intensity. In these often-dangerous encounters, self-knowledge is acquired, tested, or rejected by either guest or host or both.
The pattern of questing or journeying that is basic to epic narrative makes visits a natural and even necessary device. And the infrequency of journeying in earlier times makes such visitations inevitably more significant than they now could be. Often it is unknown in advance whether the place and person to be visited are friendly or hostile; in the same manner, the host is often ignorant of his visitor. Yet conventions of hospitality in a world that is hard to travel require that the effort of guest-friendship be made. It is necessarily filled with the ambiguous tension of guarded interest: in this initial attitude, host and guest already mirror one another. Prosperous Dido and shipwrecked Aeneas have a classical sort of guest-friendship—wary at first, they become increasingly friendly as they see how much they have in common, her own flight from an old life running parallel to his. As they grow together, however, she begins to lose her place as founder of a new realm, and he plays at ruling until he is recalled to his own quest, which leads to her immediate ruin and the eventual ruin of Carthage itself.

Odysseus in all his travels is dependent on guest-friendships for enlightenment; because of his somewhat ruthless cleverness, the friendship is usually more beneficial to him than to those visited, who, like the Scherians, run the risk of destruction for their pains. Odysseus repeatedly conceals or plays with his identity in new situations, testing both himself and his hosts. When his father is on the way home, Telemachus, who claims to know nothing of himself, goes visiting, paralleling in a small way his father’s experience, and learning enough of himself to become worthy of his father. Dante is a guest in Hell (though often an unwanted one), in Purgatory, and in Paradise, learning much about his human nature from the souls he visits. In the House of Temperance, Arthur and Guyon are both attended by women who reflect dominant characteristics in their own natures: as Alma says to Guyon,

Why wonder yee
Faire Sir at that which ye so much embrace?
She is the fountaine of your modestee;
You shamefast are, but Shamefastnesse it selfe is shee.

Both Arthur and Guyon have at first been taken aback by the demeanor of these women, and need to have their likenesses explained. Then they come to be more at home with their own natures.

It is not by accident that Arthur and Guyon thus learn themselves by looking at women. The roles of women in epic poetry are significant and archetypal, as, to some extent, we have already seen. Obviously, a major separation that consciousness brings about is that between male and female: the mythic first parent is hermaphroditic, and there is a tradition that Adam was hermaphroditic before the creation of Eve. There are significant role divisions between men and women in epic, although these are not inevitable, and they change considerably through the centuries. In general, the male hero is a clearly defined, recognizably human and mortal person who moves through time and space to perform a specific action or task. Many of the major female characters are less clearly defined, are much less often described in action, and have no
specific quest. They are often identified with a particular place which, however, their spheres of influence may transcend.

Obviously the male-female polarity is of much more importance than most other kinds of oppositions in the epic because it is so inclusive and so basic. I have said before that the female symbol is not necessarily to be identified with real women, but is involved with a whole complex of things—night, space, eternity, intuition, sensuousness, receptivity, experience—which are traditionally associated with one another, and opposed to maleness, day, time, intellect, activity, argument. The epic works out in terms of characters the problems posed by these sometimes self-defeating oppositions. Because so much can be symbolized in relationships between men and women, the male-female polarity comes to stand for a great deal.

Most of the women in epics can be classified into one or more of the following categories: (1) the cave and its attendant associations with unconsciousness, darkness, the unknown, mystery, evil; (2) relatives and helpmates, mothers or sisters; (3) the cause or way of human activity and its reward. The magnitude of all these female figures—the fact that they so much transcend ordinary human boundaries—is not so much a comment on men’s idea of women as it is on the human character’s sense of limitedness. While it would seem that the division ought to be described in terms of more equality, the consciousness describing it is always male and naturally tends to associate all the unknown, mysterious forces of the universe with something totally different from himself. He does imagine some sort of supreme force which is male, like him, but that force is detached and remote, like Zeus, or else is a predecessor whose powers are limited like his own. The hero’s task is generally to free himself or stay free from the women associated with darkness, to stay in alliance with the women who act as mothers or sisters, and to achieve unity with those who are both way or cause and goal.

The shelter that is Achilles’ cave is shared not with a woman but with Patroclus, that androgynous figure who is like Achilles’ other self, so close that Achilles can scarcely survive without him. This is psychologically as well as literally the earliest rendition of the cave among these epics, before the male character becomes fully aware of his difference from all that surrounds him. Odysseus has Calypso, who is less threatening than monotonous: she is different from him in being female and immortal, but she is dangerous only in her desire to keep him from reentering the world, escaping the womb. Elsewhere, however, women are frequently associated with danger. They are witches or witchlike: they can hold men powerless, turn them to animals, drive them mad, or kill them. At the beginning, none of these figures can much influence a hero outside of her own place; Circe, the Sirens, the women associated with Turnus do not journey. Later witch-women include Alcina, Armida, Duessa, Lucifera, and Acrasia. Some, like Lucifera, are still entirely identified with their own residences; others, like Armida, can travel as much as the hero himself. That, I suppose, is an incipient recognition that one is always vulnerable to the dark places of the mind.

Most of these figures lack independent personalities, and are identifiable primarily by the apparatus with which they work their wiles. In Homer, who is not judgmental,
they have real sexual charm. In most of the later epics, the poet reveals that charm to be bogus, a façade masking underlying evil. Thus, while Odysses can have sexual relations with Circe because he is a match for her (which his men are not), in Christian epics such dalliance is always dangerous. Yet it also seems necessary. All these characters test the hero’s power to withstand sensual temptation and its accompanying oblivion. To give in to them is at best to fall back to a prehuman state. But their power is so great that unless the hero confronts it and learns consciously to detach himself from it, he is always vulnerable. And there are plenty of examples of characters who cannot learn, who even choose not to learn, like Elpenor, who drunkenly falls off Circe’s roof, or Gryll, who would rather be Acrasia’s hog than a man.

Almost the only thing to be done with these figures is to subdue or escape them, although there are hints at more. Odysses was Circe’s lover, and Rinaldo chooses to be the captive Armida’s knight. Since the enchantresses do not get killed, they have to be continuously acknowledged. Odysses and Circe, in a guiltless world, can take delight in each other’s powers. But Armida has to abandon her magic, and although Rinaldo says he will be her knight, he has more life-and-death power over her than she ever had over him. She has been subdued, the price she pays for becoming human.

Except for Armida, witch-women are less female characters than they are symbols of the cave. Women warriors in epic are real people, but they also acknowledge men’s combined fear of and fascination with what seems utterly alien and mysterious. Like the witch-women, they are symbols of the past, not of human beginnings, but of a matriarchal stage of civilization. In almost every epic, and generally on the wrong side, they are nevertheless almost always treated as admirable. Spenser’s negative portrait of Radigund is exceptional in the tradition. But the idea of the woman who dares to “war with men” (Aeneid, i.493) is obviously both fascinating and frightening: Reports of Amazons who form their own female society, and admit men only in order to use them, persist in travelers’ tales through the Renaissance. The men who kept the records and wrote the epics did not have to commemorate women in this way, and fear of such a society might have more prudently dictated its elimination from human consciousness, or at least the portrayal of such women in less favorable terms. There is fear. But as the epic witnesses to the universal male-female polarity, it also suggests the possibility of a world in which women can flourish as well as men.

Tasso, Spenser, and Ariosto in particular make quite explicit the ambiguity of the tradition. Tancred kills and then baptizes Clorinda, whom he loves. Both Ariosto and Spenser present a variety of valiant women, ranging from two heroines as worthy as any men—Bradamante and Britomart—to Radigund the cruel Amazon queen, and this would seem equivalent to their treatment of men. But their authorial comments appear self-contradictory. Although Spenser’s whole poem celebrates the Faerie Queene and frequently pauses to praise famous women, he also seems to undercut himself by taking time out to denounce female rule. In his poem Belphoebe rescues her weaker sister from the tyrant who exemplifies lust, and Britomart has to rescue Artegall, her lover, from the Amazon Radigund, who has put him in women’s clothes.
Tyranny makes any relationship impossible, he seems to be saying: cold-hearted Belphoebe causes pain without knowing it, but equality in love can accommodate equality in strength.

Women appear also in more ordinary roles, as mothers and companions. More mobile and limited than the witches and less gifted as mortal beings than the Amazons, they are to some extent in bondage to mortality, even though they may be goddesses. Mothers have given birth to mortal men; sisters and lovers care greatly about their men and may be mortal themselves. The most significant mothers are in two of the earliest epics—Thetis, mother of Achilles, and Venus, mother of Aeneas; they do little except to demonstrate the pain of a mixed loyalty, and to remind us of their sons' heritage. More complex relationships are the companionate ones, which may be or become sexual. Examples of these are Odysseus and Athena, Redcrosse and Una. Odysseus and Athena are real mirror images, who enjoy themselves in one another. Una and Redcrosse, on the other hand, are distinct enough to work sometimes athwart each other, sometimes to one another's benefit. Athena can safely leave Odysseus alone much of the time, because her strengths are his: she knows what he can do. Separated, Una and Redcrosse cannot achieve their objective, which requires their combined powers. Both pairs enhance, correct, and enable one another.

The most comprehensive relationships of all, and the most difficult to describe, are those in which women function as either cause or way, and as end. Such women are the direct opposite of Calypso, who stands for the mysterious darkness from which men have emerged: they are the mysterious light toward which men go and in which at best they travel. As the emergence from original darkness is painful because it involves so much separation and knowledge of death, the movement toward these women can often happily involve the restoration of wholeness on a higher level. Consciousness is an instrument of progress, yet the end is a mystery, beyond logic.

Two transitional figures are Helen and Angelica, both beautiful, dangerous, and irresistible. Helen is cause and goal of the Trojan war, and a mystery even to herself. The old Trojan men who speak of her unearthly beauty testify to the inevitability of wars being fought for her, yet the logic is nonexistent. She does not even comprehend herself, or sense that her life is real. Angelica, too, often seems more symbol than reality. Her loveliness draws all men to her, yet her constant vanishing and reappearing, not always at her own pleasure, makes her unapproachable by them, and makes the reader wonder whether she exists. It is her fate finally to love Medoro, who is more virtuous than Paris, but otherwise no more deserving of her than Paris is of Helen. Helen and Angelica do not choose to be dangerous: unlike the witches, they too are at the mercy of the world, and their own beauty deprives them of stability.

Penelope and Beatrice are more fulfilled and fulfilling characters. Penelope is as wily as her husband, maintaining her freedom in such a way that, whatever happens, she will survive. That is important in itself: she and Odysseus are mutual mirrors, deserving of one another.

Odysseus does not exactly hurry home from the war. True, he is at the mercy of various unfriendly forces. But he unnecessarily explores some places, like the domains of Circe and the Cyclops. He is unquenchably thirsty for ex-
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Penelope makes it possible for time to stand still while he learns. Homer is not a time-conscious poet to begin with, of course. But the passage of time is marked in the poem by frequent mention of how long Odysseus has been gone, by the growing up of Telemachus, and by the increasing impatience and impudence of the suitors. Yet Telemachus, though a man in years, has not matured; the suitors have been maintained like tame geese; time has not critically affected Odysseus' kingdom. Penelope's weaving and unweaving of her web also connects her with both the fates and eternity. She controls events, controls time. And her weaving connects her with the ancient female symbol of the spider, gathering in and immobilizing the suitors, but also at long range gathering in Odysseus himself. The poem makes the reader feel her power all the time, bringing her husband home.

Again there is identification of woman with place. Helen is in the wrong place, and her location in Troy marks that city for siege and destruction. Dido is identified with her city and its fate. On Ithaca, Penelope is a match for the invaders, as she is for Odysseus, who has to invade his own domain. Once Odysseus recaptures Ithaca, he intends to leave again, as St. George does, when Una is re-established in her kingdom. Yet obviously this does not simply mean that male is active and female passive. Una, after all, goes to get St. George, and makes it possible for him to become who he is when he arrives at her Eden. Both Redcrosse and Dante are hopelessly incompetent at the beginning of their poems to handle their own lives. Redcrosse does not even have an identity; Dante defines himself in negatives—he is not Aeneas or St. Paul. Both learn self-mastery only through the guidance of their

women. Beatrice leaves her footprints in Hell for Dante, to insure that he can become himself and thereby an inheritor of the heavenly city.

In the beginning the mysteriousness of the woman was a sign of the unknown origins of consciousness. Then it became a threat. Now it can signify the regaining of wholeness, mysterious because wholeness cannot be fully comprehended. The woman gathers in; the man wanders. Sometimes, as with Beatrice and Gloriana, she is there at the beginning and at the end, sending forth and receiving again. Her wholeness means that she does not have to wander; all things come to her or are contained in her, although she may sometimes have to leave her place to bring someone to her. Sometimes man's resentment or fear of her power is her destruction: she is seen as threat, like Dido in Carthage, Clorinda in Jerusalem. Penelope and Una are strong enough to resist threat and find deliverance. The city of Beatrice is beyond all possibility of threat, a city that will gather in its citizens until it contains all.

Although, as I have said before, antithetical female-male imagery is symbolic, not literal, such symbolism obviously is taken literally in sex characterization through these epics. Even in Spenser, who builds and improves upon romance tradition in employing major female heroines who function like male heroes in the world, Britomart's primary task is to find Artegall, her mate. Nevertheless, both she and Ariosto's Bradamante are their own women, unmysterious, with clearly individualized motivation. The freeing of women from typical roles accompanies the man's freeing of himself from fears which he had located in her. Bradamante is a woman living in
history, opposing her sure knowledge of Ruggiero's destiny to the fantastic efforts of Atlantes to save his ward from mortal life. Britomart is described as combining in herself manly terror with amiable grace. Artegall, in learning to become worthy of her, goes from one extreme to the other, first depending on the strong man Talus, then allowing himself to be taken captive by the beauty of the Amazon Radigund. Spenser's characters are learning to acknowledge and integrate the opposite poles of being within themselves.

So far I have discussed two ways by which the epic hero can learn and test his identity in relation to others. He can simply acknowledge his difference from and his need for other people. That is what the convention of guest-friendship does. When Agamemnon came home from the war, he was unprepared for his reception by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra: he had been replaced in his absence, and could be neither guest, friend, nor husband in his own house. That is why Odysseus' extreme caution seems so necessary, not only in testing matters in Ithaca, but in his whole way of choosing and asserting his identity all the way home. The second means of learning and testing is through relationships with women and, more generally, one's own unconscious mind. If the hero has succeeded well enough in defining himself, separating himself from nothingness and the dangers of nothingness (the Cyclops, Calypso), then Penelope, not Clytemnestra, will be waiting for him at the end. His own opposite qualities are restored to him as treasure, not destruction, and he becomes whole.

Throughout epic it is apparent that no choices are simple: the hero cannot often establish a relationship with either a person or a place based on the evidence that he thinks his senses give him. Sensory pleasures are seldom rejected by the epic hero; temperance is called for, but the world is to be enjoyed. Nevertheless, the senses cannot be trusted for critical decisions. Milton in Areopagitica argues that good and evil are almost indistinguishable from one another, and even in Homer's poems, where moral judgments are less frequent than they are later, look-alikes constantly deceive. The use of twins, doubles, and other ocular deceptions is very old in literature, and obviously accompanies the struggle to achieve and surpass consciousness and self-consciousness.

The mind plays upon itself the tricks that it wants to play. Hector, deceived to his death by the false Deiphobus outside the gates of Troy, fought the war because he believed in comradeship. Dido and Aeneas need to fall in love with each other: their lives are look-alikes, and their need is facilitated by Cupid masked as Ascanius. The trick is worked from outside because, especially in these early poems, consciousness is externalized. Later, it is still done that way, but the hero's responsibility for his decisions becomes more obvious, and the gods are less likely to be involved. In Ariosto's poem, the magician Atlantes proliferates look-alikes in order to keep Ruggiero captive, and even though Bradamante has been told that she will have to kill a phantom copy of her lover, she cannot bring herself to do it. Tasso uses the same device in his dark wood, to keep the heroes from their task. Redcrosse Knight, with his defective vision, cannot distinguish between Una and Duessa, and the false Florimel seems to all the world to be real.

So, relationships are essential to self-knowledge and
self-fulfillment, but the world is made in such a way that establishment and maintenance of these relationships seem almost impossible to achieve. The senses bring enjoyment of the world, but they can never be trusted, as we see again and again in the false gardens of Alcina, Armida, Acrasia. Guyon, whose story is temperance, so intemperately destroys the Bower of Bliss because its pleasures really lead to a stupefaction of the senses. The many unmaskings of false bowers and maidens show that, again and again, their overwrought devices deceive people into making love to what is rotten and corrupt, thereby becoming less human rather than more so. And so, as one must learn to detach oneself from a part of one’s own mind (the unconscious) in order to possess it, one must learn detachment from the senses in order to enjoy them accurately. Sense knowledge tells Odysseus that Calypso and Nausikaa are more beautiful than Penelope, but his whole being tells him that Penelope is more important: knowing that, he can enjoy Calypso and Nausikaa without being absorbed by them.

The problem is seldom that obvious, however. Not even being told the plain truth saves Ariosto’s characters, but the magic ring of Angelica, which is identified with reason, does (8.2). This ring not only reveals everything else as it is; it also makes the wearer invisible, and therefore usually free from danger. The aspect of invisibility is interesting. It removes the wearer from the sense knowledge of others, but possibly it also suggests that removal from one’s own senses (the temporary disappearance of the body) may have some relation to right judgment. Although the ring is identified with reason, it is obvious that reason, which after all is at least partly based on sensory evidence, is not enough. It is reasonable of the Redcrosse Knight to suspect Una of infidelity when (as far as he can see) he catches her in the act. It is reasonable of Hector to think that Deiphobus is helping him. But the mind and the body are so interrelated, and so flawed, that judgments made in the body cannot be depended on. Ariosto’s tone is comic, and his means of releasing characters from their bodies is temporary and illusory; yet the device is not altogether different from the more serious ordeal of Dante, who has to pass through fire, purging himself from lust and the last weakness of the senses, in order truly to become master of himself.

It is wholly unreasonable, it would seem, to depend for clarity on magic rings and purging flames. I have said that Penelope was waiting for Odysseus because he succeeded in self-definition, and it is true that Odysseus considers all aspects of every problem that he encounters. But he does not always use reason, and if he had been married to Clytemnestra, not Penelope, everything might have come out differently. Penelope is his way as well as his reward, and it is something other or more than reason that saves the heroes. Reason is not enough, any more than the conscious mind is enough. One becomes conscious in order to transcend consciousness, and rational in order to reach beyond reason. The necessity for a fuller kind of consciousness is very well shown in the treatment of women already described. The women of epic poems who are associated with origin and end can almost be said to create their men. Thus, in the Faerie Queene, Britomart, who has seen Artegall only in a magic glass, is more overjoyed to hear him praised than a mother is, after carrying a child for nine months, to see it emerge safely (3.2.11). Be-
atrice’s eyes are repeatedly described as mirrors through which Dante receives illumination.

Mirroring connects the woman outside with the self within. Obviously, looking at oneself in a mirror is dangerous: that is the Narcissus story. But if the image of God in man is the soul, then contemplation of oneself is a valid religious activity: one of Dante’s dreams in Purgatory shows him Rachel, sitting all day before her mirror, enamoured of her own eyes (Purgatorio, 27.94–108). And mirrors are repeatedly used for self-education in epics, as we have already seen in such devices as the mirroring shields. The walls of Logistilla’s palace, to which Ariosto’s Ruggiero repairs after his stay with Alcina, are made of a material that reflects men’s bodies and souls:

Looking at himself in the bright mirroring surfaces, he sees himself truly, knows himself, and grows wiser; he will not fall for false praise or false blame, either. Moreover, the clear light of this stone imitates the sun, shining so brightly that whoever has such stone, wherever he is, can make daylight whenever he wants. . . . [p. 155]

The brightness of self-knowledge that in Dante makes the body luminous seems to emphasize the connection between self-knowledge and relationships with others. The souls in Purgatory and Paradise begin to intuit one another; thoughts are reflected back and forth like light:

“Pray, bring to my wish speedy fulfillment, blest spirit,” I said, “and give me proof that what I think I can reflect on thee.” [Paradiso, 9.18–20]

“I would not await thy question if I were in thee as thou art in me.” [Paradiso, 9.80–81]

The lives of St. Thomas and St. Francis (founders of opposing orders) are made to describe and praise one another, and the Cross of Souls “flames forth Christ” (14.104). Intuitive reasoning of the sort possessed by angels has brought these souls to unity with one another and with Christ. Contemplation of self has become identical with wholeness.

The fact that the epic aims at psychic integrity is the reason why its scale has to be cosmic. Whatever opposite poles sky and earth may represent, there is always a relationship between the macrocosm and the human microcosm: the hero learns to reach out toward and to include the whole range of being. And he has to acknowledge information received from these sources. Every epic has at least one heavenly messenger, and either a visit to or messages from the underworld. From these sources the hero learns what he cannot learn by human reason.

Every epic contains prophecy. The hero’s mind is not only coextensive with his world; it also includes the past and the future. From books, visions, dreams, lectures, visits, he learns the story of his people and his own place in it. The prophecy is not always clear to us: scholars have never come to agreement about the meaning of what Aeneas learns in the underworld. But clarity is not its function; prophecy is intrinsically an affront to the analytic human mind. As sky and underworld extend the hero in space, prophecy extends his command of time, and by these means he becomes godlike.

A more familiar kind of transcendence in time is achieved through the bond between fathers and sons, and in this group are spiritual as well as biological fathers. One of
Achilles' important characteristics (negative as it is) is his lack of a father, the sense he has of being unrelated, in this context of warfare, to what is happening. He constantly longs to go home, recover his own son, and lead a life that makes sense to him. One of Priam's important characteristics is that he is so much a father. The sense of family life, and the tragedy of its disruption, is what distinguishes the city of Troy from the Greek camp outside. At the end, the search for his son Hector is what brings Priam to Achilles. They remind one another explicitly of the importance of relationships between fathers and sons, and as they look at one another are reminded both of the wonder and of the suffering of humanity. In each other's presence they are able to sleep and eat again, reaffirming in one another the continuity of life.

Aeneas cannot leave his father in Troy, as Anchises desires, because he is necessary to the first part of the enterprise. In the structure of his poem, Vergil demonstrates the epic's concern with the mysterious relationship between past and future. Anchises can lead Aeneas to his own limits, but for both of them the pull backward to their known, lost lives is almost overwhelming. In settlements like Little Troy, it becomes apparent both how hard it is to forget the past, and how dangerous it is to dwell in it. Anchises' death is part of the pattern of loss in the first six books that forces Aeneas out on his own. When Anchises dies, his son begins to be called Father Aeneas. But only the knowledge of Anchises from beyond life's limits really enables Aeneas to turn toward the future, though that knowledge is burdensome in its obscurity as well as in its importance.

Aeneas' search for his father has been a search for his new self; making a final visit to the past, he discovers the future. Telemachus has a similar, though less weighty experience. Ignorant of himself and his father (near the beginning of the Odyssey, he says that he does not know himself to be Odysseus' son), he goes looking for himself in seeking news of Odysseus. In this poem, there is no involvement with history. Telemachus and Odysseus simply affirm one another's present; they have made themselves worthy of each other.

Hero of his own poem, Dante takes Vergil as his father and guide through the first part of his journey. Both Dante and Statius, another poet whom the two meet in Purgatory, have made Vergil their model, yet they cannot end where Vergil did. Their relationships are properly more Vergilian than Homeric. Vergil showed Statius the way to Christianity without finding it himself; he takes Dante to Paradise without being able to get there himself; his last action in the poem is to crown and mitre Dante as his own sovereign. Still more guides emerge in Paradise, to illumine and also to test. Peter, James, and John examine Dante on faith, hope, and love, respectively. Bernard of Clairvaux gives him his last instruction in contemplative wisdom.

The idea of the father as mirror and guide ought to flourish under Christianity, as it does very clearly in Dante. It does so, but its mode changes, becoming more tentative as it is crowded out of or confused by romance, and by the competition between classical and Christian motifs. In Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser, the complex and glittering patterns of romance can sometimes reduce the father-guide to a minor or less effective role. A tutor like Atlantes, who tries to shield his pupil from life, or a minor
character like Guyon's Palmer, cannot be considered a major part of this tradition. On the other hand, the greatly increased importance of God the Father in ordinary life cannot easily be reflected in epic. The classical supernatural, still considered a necessary part of the genre, not only competes with Christianity, but has the advantage of being more immediately accessible just because the classical gods are so much more anthropomorphic.

However, there is a strand in the tradition which cuts across motifs, denies oppositions between natural and supernatural, male and female, and prepares us for a fuller use of the Christian God. Athena, Beatrice, Godfrey, and the Faerie Queene, as specific characters, seem to partake of both human and divine qualities, and impart a mysterious resonance to human existence that raises it above the limited categories by which it has been defined. An increased attentiveness to the muse, especially in Spenser, also adumbrates a new relationship with the divine. But the obvious Father-Son relationship available in Christianity, which, in the Incarnation, changed the terms of human life, has not yet been boldly used.

Heavenly messengers, the underworld, and prophecy all extend the hero's consciousness. Together with the use of fathers and sons, they also show us the care with which epic is built. One goes to the past in order to reaffirm it at its best, to contrast it with the less illustrious present, and to transform it into a contemporary vision. Within the epic, sons go to their fathers to learn, first, an awareness of the essential human condition, whatever may be there when all else is stripped away; that awareness may be simply of the value of the continuity of life. Father and son prove this reciprocally. Anchises has to be persuaded to leave Troy. The experience of Priam and Achilles is mutual. Hector and Aeneas care about the continuity of their people, but it is made more immediate for them in their sons.

The existence of generations is a basis for criticism. Primitive Florence claims a purity that criticizes the city of Dante. Heroes are never as strong and brave as once they were. The epic may be set in a past distanced from the time of the poet, so that it can become a criticism of his own time. The tradition that tries to conserve the past does so in order to make the present more aware of its deficiencies, its own departures from the possible. So past and present are a continuous pressure upon one another from which the future is born. The future, already prefigured in the past, may be thought of by the poet with a good deal of dread. For the hero, it contains labor, exile, suffering, death; any hopes, for further adventures, dreams, or empires, are qualified by this knowledge. Fear is not conquered, but at the end the hero accepts a new beginning.

Perhaps there is always an element of divinity in the figure of the father. By turning to his father, the hero can transcend himself, but that aspect of divinity is also misleading. Anchises' prophecies can be incorrect. The classical gods themselves indicate the limitations of man's idea of the divine. The father is simultaneously to be venerated and suspected of excessive paternalism. The best "fathers" are those, like Athena and Beatrice, who leave the hero free to fulfill himself, and make themselves more an imaginative than a literal presence. They teach a freedom from historical categories that enables them to be more rather than less seriously involved in human con-
cerns. Fathers and sons, or guides and pilgrims, are dependent upon one another, on the one hand, for this liberation from category, and, on the other, for the capacity to commit the energy of liberation to creative activity in the world.

6. Identity

Thee I re-visit now with bolder wing,
Escap't the Stygian Pool, though long detain'd
In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight
Through utter and through middle darkness borne
With other notes then to th'Orphean Lyre
I sung of Chaos and Eternal Night,
Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to reascend,
Though hard and rare. . .

[3.13-21]

The epic as poem engages in the same experiences that its characters do. That is, we can talk about the relationship between the author and his work in the same way that we can discuss the hero and his task. The epic itself becomes experience while the poet-narrator becomes the hero. Dante is explicitly the hero of his poem, achieving total consciousness through study of the faults and virtues of other men, and through the self-mirroring created by his pairing with Vergil, his mentor and other self. But Dante understood the validity of his use of himself partly by studying the Aeneid, and seeing that Vergil had thought of his poem as an epic task. Ariosto is the only possible hero of his poem, repeatedly calling attention to the great labor of the task of weaving the multiple strands of the Orlando Furioso. Without him there is no coherence: it is his heroic labor that holds the poem together.

The poem that shows man his mortality shows it first to the bard, and first affords immortality to the blind (mortal) bard through his gift. The epic poem also strikingly describes the mortal-immortal nature of man, and his self-consciousness, in the nature of its creation. Like no other genre, the epic cannibalizes itself, mirrors its predecessors, and passes judgment on them. This innovation has to be ascribed to Vergil, who works with the Iliad and the Odyssey as though they were composed of movable parts, creating out of them his own poem. The method accomplishes a number of different things simultaneously. First, in its own way it demonstrates mortality. The Iliad and the Odyssey obviously do not die as man does, yet they do come out of a culture that is dead, and part of their continued interest is their place in their tradition, rather than simply in their own time. Like many Italian artists after him, Vergil saw ancient art as stuff to be torn down and recreated. He enabled Homer's poems, like people, to live on in their descendants. His acceptance of their impermanence made them permanent in their flexibility, in the way in which the Aeneid is only and uniquely itself, yet contains and reminds us of the past. It imitates death and resurrection.

Obviously the method demonstrates Vergil's self-consciousness, his understanding of the epic task, and his sense of kinship with Homer. It gives him ready-made common ground; in any way he chooses he can reflect
Homer's stories. The story of Dido is, for example, an ironic repetition of Nausikaa's, the idyllic pastoral transformed into a sophisticated seduction: the reader should anticipate that, if Odysseus left Nausikaa, it is likely that Aeneas will leave Dido. Vergil's poem is a transforming mirror of the earlier works. After Vergil, it is assumed that such mirroring will take place, and the reader can find in the game of tracing analogies a way of regarding history itself as a set of prototypes existing transformed in the present, and shedding light upon it. The epic is thus a training ground for life, preaching conservative revolution: all must change, yet the past and the present are one.

The first six books of the *Aeneid* are Odyssean; the last six are Iliadic, and they are also made to match and reflect one another in an elaborate parallelism. Thus in this hall of mirrors, not only do the poems of Homer and Vergil face and illuminate one another; the two halves of Vergil's poem do the same thing, and while they reflect each other we see mirrored within them the Homeric stories. After Vergil every epic in this tradition revises and mirrors its predecessors.

When we stare at this chain of epics, then, what we should see first is the interrelationships among all these hero-poets and their poems—the ways in which all the poems reflect, attack, and fulfill one another. This is one genre in which T. S. Eliot's belief in the moving power of tradition is not only right but definitive; each additional epic changes its predecessors, consciously and explicitly. The *Aeneid* becomes more itself by taking on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; yet having done so, in some sense it no longer needs them. It has been said that Milton ended the epic tradition: he did so no more than any other epic poet.
history. Epic contains the past in at least two different ways—in recovering the history of its own action, and in providing recollections of epics of the past. For the latter, the later the epic, the more history it can encompass, just as the later each man exists in time the longer the life he can achieve vicariously.

Nothing is ever completed neatly. The hero wants to achieve some goal, yet his own education—the situations in which he is involved in process—is what really matters. The poet’s attitude toward his poem frequently is affected by dissatisfaction and a sense of incompleteness. Vergil on his deathbed is said to have asked that his poem be burned: its last lines have always struck readers as remarkably abrupt and harsh. Tasso wrote in pain and uncertainty, almost killing his poem by revising it according to the dictates of his critics. Spenser’s Faerie Queene remains uncompleted; its total openness is epic.

There is also inevitably a sense of ongoingness in the epic, if only because of its length. The reader is aware of its being written over a long period of time, and often the original readers or hearers were sharing a work in progress: such was probably true of Homer’s poems and certainly of Ariosto’s and Spenser’s. It may be difficult for the reader, then or now, to grasp the whole action. Calculated stoppings and startings, repetitious or interlaced episodes, and multiple jumps from one episode to another often seem positively to defy comprehension. We think it characteristic of art to provide for us a “stay against confusion,” to eliminate the clutter of irrelevance that makes up so much of daily life. Despite appearances, the epic does achieve this purpose. Its complexity is not a jumbling of the details of real life, but a strenuous effort to render the frustration and the grandeur of heroic thought, which is always outstripping itself in impressive attempts to conceive and grasp new wholes.

The openness of epic beginnings is consistent with their conclusions. The author has tried to write a comprehensive work, for which in one lifetime there is rarely a second chance. Obviously the poem ends with a perspective wider than that with which it begins, but its conclusion may also be extremely inconclusive, ambiguous, or even lacking. It cannot be wholly coincidental that the writer’s last work on epic is often done just before his death. Young men do not write epics before going on to other things, nor is an epic often put aside because it is finished to the author’s satisfaction: it is in process as long as he is.

In medias res, then, is one way to describe the whole of an epic, not just its beginning. It is a narrative, a story, yet it begins in the middle and never concludes. The medium, and the means, are their own justification. The poem is like those ocular deceptions that Renaissance people were so fond of. It does have a beginning, a middle, and an end: battles are fought and won, marriages occur, heroes come home. Yet to give all one’s attention to some glorious, palpable achievement is the preoccupation of minds tuned to chronology and climax. The epic allows this preoccupation to be satisfied; at the same time, it insists upon the inadequacy of such a viewpoint and encourages the reader to find other rewards.

The human condition, as portrayed in epic, suggests what seems to be a universal sense of a split between action and contemplation, aspects in eastern thought of yin and yang. The union of the two is the ideal; their separation and degradation are the norm. Epic attempts to iden-
tify the danger points, on the one hand, as concentration on specific worldly goals, and, on the other, as relapse into the debased garden state. In western tradition, the idea of achievement has always been the most compelling and dangerous: therefore, the epic simultaneously admires and undermines physical conquest, and stresses self-discovery. The ideal of contemplation, associated for us with the garden, is traditionally more congenial to eastern thought, and is seldom the direct goal of an epic character. Its dangers are sensuous self-abandon and idleness. The epic hero is almost always tempted to recoil against the mindless violence that is usually at least a part of his culture, by resorting to another kind of mindlessness, as discussed earlier—in the garden, suicide, or madness. But he survives. True self-knowledge, in these epics, is always arduously and consciously earned, not achieved by mystical or anti-intellectual modes of contemplation. Yet we have seen that there is a pattern of movement away from primitive formlessness, toward self-assertion, and then away from that into a more conscious form of integration with a whole. This narrative pattern is structurally supported.

Pulling against our narrative expectations—against the real existence of story in every epic—is a nonnarrative structure that implicitly explains problems raised by exclusive attention to chronological events. The *Iliad*’s many books devoted to battle details appear redundant if one is judging them as part of a sequence progressing toward a goal. However, if their purpose is to satiate the reader with the details of bloody warfare, then it becomes more difficult to judge how much is enough. The poem can be read as a series of passionate scenes, beginning with the strife between Achilles and Agamemnon. The battle se-

quences occupy the middle of the poem; their intention is to give us the feel of war and enable us as fully as possible to appreciate the concluding embrace of Achilles and Priam. It is as though those battle scenes were intended as a perspective glass through which to view a final symbolic portrayal of the best to which man can bring himself in this life.

Spenser designed his poem as a wheel, in which the action, instead of following in a simple line, rays out from its center and Gloriana’s court, and then, in some way not arrived at by the poem, returns to that center again. The *Faerie Queene* is a game played upon a wheel-shaped board, with each knight advancing or retreating along its spokes according to the cast of the dice announced in successive stanzas. Arthur appears to travel in a circle around the rim. Although he is supposed to be in search of the Faerie Queene, from whose court each of the other knights has come, he neither asks nor receives directions. The circular movement itself is a way of getting there. Ariosto saw his poem as a web woven by the artist who finds the most compelling reason for life in the pleasure that he takes in his control over the story which so aggressively refuses a simple chronological line, but weaves in and out with the greatest, almost perverse, complexity imaginable.

The alternating viewpoint with which one is permitted to look at epic—the *trompe l’oeil* patterning—trains the mind and eye for the reintegration of the apparent opposites of action and contemplation. It works like a perspective picture of the interchanging patterns of figure and ground. We can neither stay with the story nor rest in the pattern; the story is not only an account of progress toward a goal, nor is the pattern a static rendering of ex-
experience. The story undercutsthe value of action; the pattern is made up of unceasing motion. The ideal life of man, in which action and thought, body and soul, are integral with one another, is being restored, or achieved, by the demands that the poem makes upon the reader. As with immortality, by giving up the false contemplation represented by the Bower of Bliss, man learns true contemplation by immersing himself in the active pattern of life.

The poems also contain moments of transcendence which the characters themselves achieve in time. Dante’s whole poem could be said to be such a moment, and any epic poet calling upon the muse is asking, on behalf of his art, for this power. In a lesser way, the dreams and visions frequent in epic are transcendent moments that teach the characters how to live in time, free of its power. Finally, there are infrequent moments of arbitrary, unexpected joy in the midst of life, such as occurs to Hector when he knows himself to be completely happy in battle. Such, also, is the vision of the Graces glimpsed by Calidore on Acidale. Colin Clout believes that the Graces bestow their gift arbitrarily; at any rate, there is no way in which it can be won by traditional heroic achievement.

By now it must be apparent that “traditional heroic achievement,” while seen by none of these writers as unnecessary or invalid, always goes side by side with less obvious but at least equally important psychological achievement. Battles and empires may be won, but their celebration is not the dominant emotion with which we take leave of the poem. Just as the epic begins in the midst of things, so it never really comes to an end. Comedy formally concludes with marriages; the process of tragedy...
possible by their knowledge of each other, yet they are not the same selves they were before, and now they are like two worlds embracing. Odysseus' safety was dependent on her, not just at the last but throughout the poem, as she enabled the unconscious world to open itself to him. Their wholeness is portrayed traditionally as the union of male and female, which here carries with it all the archetypal associations of the words. Less impressive, though very similar, is the gift of Venus to the seafaring Portuguese when they find the island in the sea. Their maleness is complemented in the femaleness of the nymphs, and their restless consciousness in oceanic peace. From this union Venus hopes to create a new kind of people, combining strength with beauty, to inhabit the realms of Neptune from which she herself emerged. The mariners have to go back to Portugal, but it seems that they will take the nymphs with them. So the tension is not the parting of lovers, but the opposing pulls of their origins in land and sea. Like Venus, the poem hopes that a new kind of person will be born, but it cannot record the event.

Another characteristic epic marriage, which is a type of the embrace, is the betrothal of Redcrosse and Una, after only one portion of the unfinished Faerie Queene. Their betrothal is what their whole experience with each other in Fairyland has made possible, as they learn to complement each other, and strengthen rather than undermine each other's weaknesses. Like Odysseus, Redcrosse can now go on to many new adventures, for which he is better prepared than he was. But neither looks forward to a very secure future. The moment of wholeness in the epic is brief and fragile. Just when the war is over and problems seem solved, the wedding of Ruggiero and Bradamante is interrupted by the challenge and killing of Rodomonte. Rodomonte dies cursing and goes to Hell, and further wars and fighting are inevitable. We are never allowed to think, "happily ever after."

The "embrace" between Turnus and Aeneas is a death-grip, signifying among other things the obliteration of the Trojan race. Yet placed as it is at the very end of the poem, with no mitigating concluding words at all, it emphasizes a perspective that we cannot very well do without. Aeneas has all along portrayed the civilizing force of the new Rome coming into existence; that is what he has been educated into in the first six books. Yet, just as there he inherited the dominant characteristics of those who had to be sacrificed, here in the last books of the poem he has been exhibiting many signs of Turnus' primitive energy. Turnus has often in the poem been compared to Achilles, and Aeneas has been called pater since the death of Anchises. Thus they re-enact, with heavy irony, the scene between Achilles and Priam. At least that was a moment of affirmation, after warfare and suffering. This approaches rejection of any human encounter. Troy must lose its name and language; Turnus must lose his life. The old Troy and the primitive Italy will merge into a new anonymous whole. Humanity is foregone for the sake of humanity. The piety remains (Aeneas kills Turnus out of piety); the primitive energy remains (his own energy is directed against Turnus); and we are forced to acknowledge the great human importance of Turnus to the whole poem. But both piety and energy are so victimized by the idea of empire that one is forced to at least qualify severely the value one can assign to that idea.

Dante picked Vergil for his poet partly because he ad-
mired the concept of a world united by empire, but he makes Vergil call his own poem a tragedy, and himself abandons all worldly enterprise. Like Odysseus and Penelope, he and Beatrice pull into the male-female archetypes all the associated opposites with which they belong, and, much more explicitly than with Penelope, the power of Beatrice enables Dante's journey.

We have seen that the concept of a place of final wholeness exists as the opposite of the original cave. As the cave has come to represent not just original formlessness but a repository of all the unconscious and repressed fears and passions of the human mind, the imagined Heaven is a place of bliss, won by the use of consciousness to transcend itself. That state of fulfillment, however, is all but unimaginable, and its description is beyond the resources of language. The hero, recognizing that he cannot go back and still retain his humanity, nevertheless mistakenly seeks respite in false paradises and willed oblivion. Only rarely in epic does the true Paradise appear, as vision of the future in the Faerie Queene, and as Dante's briefly visited Paradiso.

Thus the epic embrace is of such major and definitive importance. Painful, partial, or momentary as it may be, it is also seen as worth everything. For this, although he may not entirely realize it, the hero became human and played his part in life. Obviously, it is a symbol of the reconciliation of opposites, and of self-transcendence. Jung gives this symbolic interpretation of marriage, and Christian mysticism has always used the figure in an equivalent way, as a portrayal of the marriage of Christ with the soul. That experience is at the absolute limit of epic possibility. For, although it is true that the tradition does involve the supernatural, it never does so in a way that excludes possible human experience. If Aeneas is half-divine and Dante is united with a heavenly Beatrice, that is a way of saying that humanity can transcend itself in its own flesh. The power of the epic is its recounting of the strength that humanity has to raise itself from unconsciousness, accept the terms of mortality, and then discover that the full acceptance of those conditions enables transcendence of them. That is when spirit shines through flesh. The limitations of humanity are never more obvious than when Odysseus and Penelope embrace in a house of death. Because of these limitations, the story of their achievement endures.

There are heroes in the poem, and the poem is heroic, written by a poet-hero who embraces his counterparts in the tradition. The hero learns to know himself in spiritual journeying, in mirroring encounters with others. He learns what he has to do to fulfill himself in a world that is limited and places limits on him. He accepts his historical destiny, knowing what it is. And the epic poet accepts it for him, knowing and demonstrating its often tragic dimensions. The hero pushes the boundaries of consciousness out beyond that: the selfhood that he pioneers in time, and the transcendence of selfhood, are what matter. The poem is both active and contemplative, having a narrative and a nonnarrative pattern. It celebrates destruction and creation both in the actions of its characters and in its own participation in epic tradition. The paradoxical inextricability of these forces is complemented by many other such unions, in an existence that cannot be godlike without being mortal, creative without destruction and death, intellectual without love, male without female,
active without contemplation, communal without separation. Epic makes every demand upon the solitary mind, asking it first to define itself and learn to preserve its own integrity, and then, in seeking to reach beyond reason, to blur its boundaries again. As we read, the boundaries of the poems themselves blur, episodes are transformed into different episodes, characters from one poem find their descendants in another, and the interpretations of whole poems take on new depths in the changing flow and play of consciousness from age to age. This series of mirrors within mirrors is the tradition inherited by Milton.
Afterword

It has become a commonplace of modern criticism that Milton ended the epic tradition, by writing in so unanswerable a style, or by burlesquing epic conventions, or by raising his major scenes and characters beyond human reach. In fact, by recognizing the senselessness of asking a modern epic to perpetuate such conventions as the use of classical gods and by reworking all the old characteristics to suit his own purposes, he was only following the transformational tradition of the genre. In contrast, other Renaissance epic poets waste energy and talent trying to "antique" their work, as Spenser did, or otherwise to maintain intact what they take to be necessary features—as with Camoens' two sets of deities.

But to answer the charges against Milton in such specific terms as these, while it can be useful, is to evade the more ruinous argument that epic itself is obsolete. Critics who have no intention of blaming Milton for its demise nevertheless agree that it has no place in modern literature. It is supposed to have been the form of a simpler, more coherent age, when man and his environment were so at one that symbolism was impossible. This argument denies the central character of epic, which exists to record and perhaps to create changes in human consciousness.

Whether or not it is true that no great epic poetry has
been written since Milton's, the present study proposes a reason for its absence. The length of time between epic poems that endure is often a matter of hundreds of years, because until one epic poem can no longer adequately describe its world, there is almost no possibility that another will be created. And even then, a writer of magnitude and prophetic power has to coincide with a major crisis or turning point in human consciousness and human culture. The burden or excitement of Milton's work, felt by so many major poets down to our own time, is an indication that he has had a continuing influence, inescapable because of its real value. Although men have chafed against the power of his poetry, that power has not represented the dead hand of the past, but the living force of a mind in combat with the sterility and materialism of our own society.

From its inception the epic concerns itself with the nature of human consciousness and its relation to "outer" and "physical" reality. With the Renaissance, problems of the existence, meaning, and interrelationships of inner and outer lives become both more articulated and more critical than ever before, as the center of human meaning shifts both in metaphor and in fact to the individual human being. Classical epic provides Milton with all the materials that he needed—that is to say, with a form which could be both active and contemplative, which could give the hero a necessary and communal task, while at the same time demonstrating that he could not perform it without the self-knowledge and the mortal knowledge that are more important than the task itself.

Milton questioned the reason for the task. Having experienced the epic victory of the Puritan cause followed by its apparent failure in the Restoration, he knew that the physical action of the heroic poem was no more important than his predecessors said it was; but then he wanted to know why it should be done at all. He is the theologian of the epic line. He chose, not the story of his time, but the original story that should explain all others. Adam and Eve had lost the perfect union of outer and inner reality, and thereby committed their descendants to history, and to actions which had to be accepted, but which would often distract them from their most important quest of self-knowledge.

The gorgeous rhetoric and the vast story of *Paradise Lost* are thus both necessary and suspect. No less is adequate to tell what must be known, but in the process of telling it begins to fall apart. Raphael is uncertain how to explain the correspondence between Heaven and earth. Almost all language concerning God is totally misleading. All of Satan's language is false, and the war in Heaven is as absurd as it is sublime. Milton tells us that the whole enterprise is valueless unless the story really comes to him from the muse. The language of external things is at best inadequate to describe spiritual reality. The true nature of epic is to praise patience and heroic fortitude, virtues which in *Paradise Lost* are not greatly in evidence.

*Paradise Lost* balances creation against destruction at the center of its pattern. At the same time, the major human action of the poem concerns the unmaking of a world. Its purpose is to forerun all epic, and to explain that heroic endeavor, of the sort henceforth to be portrayed, only occurs because men are fallen. At the same time it argues that heroism existed in the original involvement of Deity with creation. Thus it both deprecates and increases the
value of the genre. It explains the hero’s flaw, and also the necessity of his redemption through epic story. There is no epic that does not in some way carry the same intention. Whether the fall of Troy, the loss of Jerusalem, or the loss of Paradise is its symbol, epic is a story of loss and of attempted renewal. The strangeness of *Paradise Lost* is only in its explicit rationalization of the enterprise.

The characteristic epic action of loss and renewal may occupy two poems, as in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, or one, as in the *Aeneid*, which consciously combines the two Greek poems. Following Homer here, as in so many things, Milton spends two poems on the pattern. *Paradise Lost* ends an era, as the *Iliad* does, or as the first half of the *Aeneid* does. In *Paradise Regained*, Jesus and Satan illustrate the opposite uses that modern man might make, or has made, of the modern world. If Eden was turned into a salt island, then Jesus would begin there, with no further attempt to glorify outer endurance and dominion. He rejects all the traditional goals of the epic hero by recognizing them as mere distractions from the human need for self-knowledge and self-control.

Satan is an alienated technocrat who has made the modern world into a desert of external things. Perhaps Milton foresaw the trivialization of epic action in a mechanized society. At any rate, one reason and technique for the diminution of Satan in *Paradise Regained* is that instead of making cosmic voyages of discovery, he now plays word-tricks and magic tricks, makes the desert bloom, provides panoramic views through telescopes, and dispenses funds for the subornation of armies and kingdoms. Scientific discoveries affirm the futility, or unimportance, of physical prowess. But where the external state of things provides

Ariosto’s reason for cynicism, it merely corroborates beliefs Milton had maintained from the beginning. As the Renaissance turned from faith in medieval hierarchies supported by scholastic reasoning to faith in science supported by experimentation, Milton remained committed to faith first and foremost in a self-knowledge uncorrupted by surfaces. One of the foremost intellectuals of his time, he idolized nothing, not even learning, and one can see accordingly how fully even God has been internalized in the course of the two epics. Neither science nor any other kind of good is to be rejected, but they are meant to serve and not to command. Milton foresaw our contemporary problems of technology, sexism, indifferent power, and senseless nationalism, and demonstrated in his Jesus a way of avoiding all these traps.

Milton made the epic interior: Jesus descends into himself. Once this has happened, the way is open for the subjective hero to take any kind of interior journey. Wishing to write their own epics, Blake, Wordsworth, and Shelley acknowledged Milton as their forebear. Yet once this line has been established, I believe that one is bound to feel a certain amount of uneasiness. At once internalized and impersonalized in Milton’s poems, God is still a very present force for life, and a means by which alienation is totally overcome as outer and inner meaning become one. When Satan scornfully asks Jesus what he is doing in this world, that is because the two of them simply do not know the world in the same way. For Satan it consists of opportunities not to be missed. For Jesus it is part of a process leading back to God in God’s own time.

Milton has argued in these two poems that evil can be rejected without any loss of power. God and Jesus both
reject Satan while maintaining in themselves the cosmic authority that makes the reader believe in the continuing force of creation. Yet with the rejection of Satan in Paradise Regained, and the lessening presence of a transcendent God, the way opens for the entirely man-centered universe of contemporary poetry. The discoveries of modern psychology having corroborated what the poets always knew about the depths of the human spirit, there is still plenty of room for voyages of discovery. There is also room for solipsism and despair, in the absolute severing of the bond between outer and inner being.

We live in a time of political, economic, intellectual, and social crisis as deep as any previously known in human history. The sicknesses Milton names are ours. Our consciousness is desperate to pierce beyond itself into a more creative and spacious kind of awareness. The lack of a modern epic (and our belief in the obsolescence of the form) is as symptomatic as our lack of faith in anything else. Until the problems of Milton's poems are no longer familiar to us, we can scarcely demand another major epic, nor can we afford to say that his is obsolete. At the same time, it would be as well if we also did not assume that he ended the epic line. Our time, like his, has seen the feverish rise and fall of many strange gods and new religions, many false prophets. But, as Milton tells us, truth takes strange and unrecognizable shapes. We have been warned sufficiently to know that epic does that too. Against the solipsism which Paradise Regained seems both to encourage and to refute, it may be possible to raise a new kind of epic in a new heroic language for our age.

Notes

Quotations from Milton are from Frank Allen Patterson et al., eds., The Works of John Milton (18 vols. in 22; New York: Columbia University Press, 1931–38), and are identified parenthetically in the text.

For the poets of the tradition, the following editions were used, and quotations are identified parenthetically in the text:


Quotations from Ludovico Ariosto, Orlando Furioso, are taken from the translation by Richard Hodgens (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), which includes the first thirteen cantos. William Stewart Rose's translation of the complete work, which first appeared between 1823 and 1831, can be found in a modern edition edited by Stewart A. Baker and A. Bartlett Giametti (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968).

Notes


The Tradition

1. I make the usual assumption that since subsequent literary epics refer back to Homer he must be included in the tradition, even though, if one is distinguishing between literary and folk, he is generally placed in the latter category. Although I have excluded "folk" epic from this study, I have not done so because of any strong belief in that distinction; in fact, most of the characteristics of these poems can be found in *Gölgemesh* and *Beowulf*. My original intention was to provide an epic context for *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* which Milton himself would have accepted.


6. Wittreich, "'A Poet amongst Poets,'" p. 102; and *Visionary Poetics: Milton's Tradition and His Legacy* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1979), esp. pp. 3-78.


8. Angus Fletcher, who has made this term current in Renaissance criticism, defines it circularly: a transcendental form is one that exceeds the limits of the genre (*The Transcendental Masque: An Essay on Milton's Comus* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971], p. 116). Such a definition may seem absurd, but, with regard to epic, it is also accurate, and consistent with such requirements as that all significant epics must include other genres as well as other epics, and that they must be great.


12. Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (first published in German, 1949), trans. R. F. Hull (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970); Erich Kahler, *The Inward Turn of Narrative* (first published in German, 1957), trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973). Since I have made some use of Neumann's work throughout this book, I should note my awareness that his ideas are controversial among Jungians, and that Neumann is probably wrong in some important respects, as in his association of the history of man with the growth of the individual person, and in his insistence on the literal historicity of specific stages of human development, including, for example, a matriarchal society. Nevertheless, Neumann is certainly right in some of his central insights, as in the description of the way in which consciousness has expanded its territory (which is my main argument here), in his description of the mother-son relationship, and, of course, in his assumption of the constant presence of certain fundamental archetypes in the human psyche, which vary importantly from one historical period, as well as from one human being, to another. Despite the uneven quality of his scholarship, it has seemed much more convenient to use this one book, where so much is brought together, than to cite the same information in scattered works of Jung, or to ignore altogether the existence of this important material.

14. As previously indicated, consciousness expands its territory. However, words like “expanded,” used in this connection, are never intended to imply a value judgment, or an idealistic reading of history. Consciousness changes, but does not necessarily improve with time.


17. Thomas McFarland, in “Lykoon and Achilles,” *Yale Review*, 45 (Winter 1956): 191–213, argues very persuasively that Achilles is angry because his only reason for fighting the war—the code of loyalty—has been ignorantly denied by Agamemnon. McFarland believes Achilles’ intelligence and profundity of character to be greater than those of any of his fellow warriors, and while this may be an overstatement, I do not intend to belittle Achilles’ intelligence by saying that it is inarticulate.


21. This change in consciousness is described by Neumann, *The Original History of Consciousness*, pp. 5–101.

22. Sometimes the sea attacks consciousness, or civilization. Troy was Neptune’s city, but Neptune himself tore it down (Aeneid, 2:608–18). See also the figure of Adamastor in Camoens’ *Lusiads*.


Judith Kates argues that in devaluing classical epic devices, by assigning them to pagan warriors, Tasso prepares the way for Milton. She particularly stresses Tasso’s emphasis on the classical ideal of individual heroism as a pagan attribute. However, personal honor was always in tension with the needs of the community, as was the elemental force of the pagan with the “civilization” of the hero. Kates’s essay is worth reading, nevertheless, for its Miltonic insights into the earlier poem. See “The Revaluation of the Classical Heroic in Tasso and Milton,” *Comparative Literature*, 26 (Fall 1974): 299–317.


27. But Mario DiCesare argues that they have echoed so positively only because they have been taken out of context (*The Altar and the City*, p. 119).

28. Peter Pope, “A Study of Tragedy in the Second Half of the Aeneid,” essay written at Ohio State University, 1972. The extent to which Vergil intended his poem to undercut the idea of empire is an open question. The earliest and most strenuous attack on the conventional reading is that of Francesco Sforza in the *Classical Review*, 49 (1935): 97–108. Mario DiCesare’s *The Altar and the City* is the most recent and fairest study.

29. Thomas Greene, *Descent from Heaven*, complains that Ariosto does not achieve epic, partly because he undermines the
church, mainspring of society, without replacing it with anything else. But that is just the point; that is what epic does, and Dante’s capacity to find a better church is so unusual as to have called in question his right to epic stature.


33. The noun “tragedy” denotes a genre; the adjective “tragic” denotes a mythos, in the terminology of Northrop Frye, who would consider “play,” not “tragedy,” a genre (Anatomy of Criticism). Confusing as it becomes to consider tragedy in both senses, I think it for all practical purposes impossible to relinquish the concept of tragedy (and allied terms, like comedy and romance) as a genre.


37. On Penelope as goal, and feminine counterpart of Odysseus, and her importance to his wholeness, see Taylor, “Odysseus, the Inner Man,” p. 27. See also Agatha Thornton, People and Themes in Homer’s “Odyssey” (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1970), p. 10, commenting on the underworld scene in Book 24, where Odysseus “emerges as the greatest” of the Greek heroes, “thanks to Penelope.”

38. The poem often uses weaving as a metaphor for trickery (see Thornton, People and Themes in Homer’s “Odyssey,” pp. 94-95), a fact which nicely connects the minds of Odysseus and Penelope.


40. See Wilkie, Romantic Poets and Epic Tradition, Chap. 1.

41. Thomas Maresca, in Epic to Novel (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), argues (rightly, I think) that mirroring is a defining characteristic of epic, and that it is an effort to repair the ruins of our first parents by confrontation of the crooked with the true, the journeying with the return, and so forth. See also Cedric H. Whitman, Homer and the Heroic Tradition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 249-84, and Brooks Otis, Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), Chaps. 6 and 7.


43. According to John Steadman, another word to describe the true goal of Christian epic is “felicity,” or “beatitude.” Surely, though, a kind of beatitude is achieved in pre-Christian moments of transcendence. Steadman’s sense that beatitude is extrinsic to the poem in Tasso and Spenser, intrinsic in Milton, is clear enough, however, and provides further evidence that Milton always goes back to basic principles. See John M. Steadman, “Felicity and End in Renaissance Epic and Ethics,” Journal of the History of Ideas, 23 (Jan.–Mar. 1962), pp. 117-32.


Paradise Lost

Notes


2. William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), i:616, cites this remark, but questions its accuracy; he thinks that some lines were composed as early as 1665.

3. I think that Arnold Stein first pointed this out in *Heroic Knowledge*, pp. 6-7. The allusion recalls the probably inauthentic prologue to the *Aeneid*, accepted in Milton's time.

4. On this use of the phrase, see William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York, 1938), p. 23. The source is 1 Cor. 1:17: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." It was cited by Christian rhetoricians from Augustine on.


7. Milton could have used the biblical episode in which Jesus is repeatedly accused of madness (having a devil) by the Jews, most emphatically because he seeks not his own glory but God's and because he promises that "if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:48-52).

8. For instance, Moses asks to see God's glory, by which he means "the full manifestation" of God's nature. Most of this information is given in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 201ff and 866b.


10. For his final illustration to *Paradise Regained*, Blake chose to visualize an embrace between Christ and his mother. It was a brilliant decision, entirely faithful to the epic, and one which Milton himself implies in the last line of the poem.

Notes

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