# The Astonied Body in *Paradise Lost*

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# THE ASTONIED BODY IN *PARADISE LOST*

BY ROSS LERNER

> He can please when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.
>
> —Samuel Johnson

> What we call art exists in order to give back the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things, in order to make the stone stony.
>
> —Viktor Shklovsky

This article is motivated by my desire to diagram the connection between two experiences that I have regularly while reading and teaching John Milton's *Paradise Lost* in its twelve-book format.[1] The first experience is one of being moved by a moment of immobility: Adam standing "astonied" when he realizes Eve has fallen, before he has a chance to consider the consequences of her fall or what his response might be.[2] For much of the poem I find myself much more compelled by Eve than by Adam, but in this moment in book 9 I feel an unprecedented and intense tremor of sympathy for Adam as he himself seems to lose the capacity to vibrate with life:

> Thus Eve with count'nance blithe her story told
> But in her cheek distemper flushing glowed.
> On th' other side Adam, soon as he heard
> The fatal trespass done by Eve, amazed,
> Astonied stood and blank while horror chill
> Ran through his veins and all his joints relaxed.
> From his slack hand the garland wreathed for Eve
> Down dropped and all the faded roses shed.
> Speechless he stood and pale till thus at length
> First to himself he inward silence broke.
>
> (9.886–95)

Shortly before this transformative moment, Adam has had misgivings regarding his dispute with Eve about whether to divide labor in Eden. Rather than tending the garden, he has spent his time apart wreathing

a garland for her, as an apology and a tribute to her rural labors. On hearing her story and seeing her bough of fairest fruit, he drops the garland, and we can feel his heartbreak: Adam is "on th' other side" from her now, as the beginning of the third line indicates. There is a wedge between his prelapsarianism and her fallenness.

I find this passage moving for reasons that extend beyond sympathy—or, I should say, somewhat paradoxically, for reasons that block my sympathy. The most moving element of this scene, the *punctum* in this tableau that I find touching and yet resistant to my interpretation, is the word "astonied": Adam "amazed, / Astonied stood and blank." The term is highlighted not only by its peculiar Spenserianism—this is the only instance in the poem when "astonied" instead of "astonished" is used—but also by the fact that it enacts what it describes ("astonied" is itself an effect of contraction, produced by unmarked elision of the "sh" in "astonished") and it is preceded by the double caesura framing "amazed" at the end of the previous line.[3] Among the lines of *Paradise Lost*, caesuras at both the line-end and between syllables 8 and 9 are relatively rare and often have expressive effects.[4] The effect is to have "amazed," bookended by caesuras, slow the reader down to encounter "astonied" with a shock that is mildly mimetic of Adam's, especially once its /st/ sound is echoed immediately in "stood." The temporality of this experience is unclear. It could be as short as a skipped heartbeat (I will return to Adam's slightly earlier and potentially related experience of arrhythmia), but the syntax and sound of the passage slows us down. The word "astonied" is most likely of Latin origin—from *ex-tonare*, meaning to stun or to thunder out of oneself. Yet there is also clearly a pun that resonates here, and it is just a stone's throw away from *stunona*, in the old English *stan* or stone: not only is Adam stunned out of himself, astonished, but he is also, for a moment, turned into something like stone (as/stone).[5]

This moment is rendered in parallax: from one perspective, the image of Adam relaxed suggests a proleptic experience of death itself, what Joshua Scodel has called a "disjoin[ing] of what joins Adam together" as both a person and a husband; from another perspective, Adam's experience of deathliness is not relaxation but seemingly its opposite, petrification.[6] Sharon Achinstein names this "premonition of his own death" a "Medusa moment," imbued with hysteria and panic, symptoms of a self-involution that turns Adam's body to stone.[7] If it is a premonition of death, it is one without any trace of rot or decay. This petrification is an inversion of the tradition emerging from Dante's *rime petrose*, in which the coldness and stoniness of the inaccessible

beloved make Dante himself—and his rhymes—turn to stone: "la mente mia ch' è più dura che petra / in tener forte imagine di petra" ("my mind harder than stone to hold fast an image of stone").[8] Here it is the "dilation" of Eve's fallen spirits and her desire to share that feeling of expansive, pseudo-angelic airiness with Adam that turns the first man to stone (9.876). The "while" in "Astonied stood and blank while horror chill / Ran through his veins and all his joints relaxed" suggests that the astonying and the relaxing are two concurrent but discrete processes; one happens "while" the other happens, and Adam is for an instant metamorphosed into a statue, albeit a strangely flaccid one. Yet perhaps "relaxed" and "astonied" are somehow different names for the same experience, not so much a contrast of hardness and slackness as two ways of describing the withdrawal of vitality from Adam's body that is also, paradoxically, a moment of profound feeling, a traumatic, temporarily Ovidian transformation that will change Adam's sense not only of Eve but of himself.[9] "Astonied stood and *blank*" echoes Milton's own description of his blindness in the proem to book 3:

> for the book of knowledge fair,
> Presented with a universal blank
> Of nature's works to me expunged and razed
> (3.47–9)

underscoring the sense of Adam's isolation from Eve here but also, looking forward, his exile from the vibrant natural world of Eden, which has already been affected by Eve's fall, with the "choicest flow'rs" (9.840) he had picked for Eve's garland suddenly reduced to "faded roses."[10] Though cast in perplexingly perspectival terms, the "astonying" of Adam's body is a moment of both excess of feeling (a shock so overwhelming that somehow Adam feels death before death becomes a possibility for him) and of an insentient petrification that seems to correspond with nature's experience of the fall as well.[11]

The oscillation between petrification and relaxation compounds Milton's long-standing interest in the affective complexity that inheres in astonishment. Even in his first published poem, "On Shakespeare" (written in 1630 and first published in 1632 among prefatory material to the Shakespeare Second Folio), the "astonishment" that readers experience when confronted with the "live-long monument" of Shakespearean texts both animates them and turns them into stone: makes them "marble," but precisely through "too much conceiving."[12] But if in "On Shakespeare" Milton is intrigued by the tension between "astonishment" as dynamizing and as ossifying, the moment of Adam

"astonied" in *Paradise Lost* proves to be a weirder paradox. The doubleness of Adam's petrification as dynamic transformation and rigorous hardening is further complicated by the loosening of his joints. The simultaneity of astonying and relaxing at this moment in *Paradise Lost* registers something like a tremor, Adam's body shocked into a limit-experience of both softness and hardness, perhaps an aftershock of the earthquake caused by Eve's fall or a proleptic intimation of Earth's second seismic "trembl[ing]" after Adam himself falls: "Earth trembled from her entrails as again / In pangs" (9.1000–1).

This, then, is the first experience I would like to account for: that I am most sympathetic with Adam when he is turned momentarily into inanimate stone, both petrified in his shock and relaxed in his premonition of death. In a metareceptive moment, we witness Adam witnessing, yet this passage does not cue up a fallen readerly identification with the unfallen first man as an embodiment of "innocent insight," an "ideal image of the intellectual," or a "universal and impossible remote object of identification," but rather as figure for radical self-emptying and loss of sovereignty, overtaken by a sense—up against the limit of insentience—of his own inhabited corpus.[13] This astonying and relaxing challenge our sense that the fall and its unfolding are punctual and teleological and that its material consequences can only be felt by Adam *after* he falls too.

The second experience that I would like to try to explicate is as much my students' as it is my own: that sense of disappointment or even dissatisfaction that comes with the stylistic change—what we might call, with reference to how Milton describes the defensive tone and contorted syntax of Adam's postlapsarian speech, the "altered style" (9.1132)—that follows shortly after this moment in the poem. My students always note how both the tone and the rhythm of Milton's verse changes in the final two books of the poem: the tone becomes more rigid and moralizing, and the verse contracts by a marked diminution of what had been, up through book 9 and most of 10, Milton's ostensibly grand style. My students are not alone. Critics have long analyzed—or if not analyzed, certainly bemoaned—the changes in tone and style in the last two books. Though a few notable readers have found these books especially affecting—Dorothy Wordsworth, for example, records in her journals that one day, "after tea I read aloud the 11th Book of Paradise Lost we were much impressed & also melted into tears"—many have been left cold, not only by their tone but also by their form.[14] Joseph Addison suggested that, in the last two books, especially the twelfth, "the author has been so attentive

to his divinity that he has neglected his poetry."[15] Such a view that theology overwhelmed poetry at the end of *Paradise Lost* held, with important exceptions, through the 1970s. The texts of books 11 and 12 produced for the Cambridge Milton for Schools and Colleges in 1976 by Michael Hollington begins its introduction with the question "*Are these books poor or dull?*" and answers unequivocally in the affirmative, encouraging students to be patient nonetheless.[16] A decade earlier Joseph Summers began an influential essay about books 11 and 12 with the following zinger: "The last two books of *Paradise Lost* have caused difficulty if not actual pain to some of the most ardent admirers of Milton."[17]

Virtually every post-1940s meditation on the difference between books 11 and 12 and what comes before in the poem quotes C. S. Lewis, who famously called these books an "untransmuted lump of futurity."[18] Lewis meant that Milton struggles to present prophetic vision and instead "makes his two last books into a brief outline of sacred history" that is not only structurally unsound, improperly incorporated into the whole, but also "inartistic": "the actual writing in this passage [books 11 and 12] is curiously bad."[19] Many critics have disputed Lewis's claims, of course; indeed, Stanley Fish's "Transmuting the Lump: *Paradise Lost*, 1942–1979" surveys how critical assumptions about books 11 and 12 evolved over the 60s and 70s, moving from a consensus that they were an embarrassment to a recognition that they were important and necessary pieces of the whole.[20] But neither Lewis nor many of the critics who have sought to resuscitate the reputation of books 11 and 12 tend to dwell on why their verse might be different, for better or worse, from what comes before, except with recourse to variations on a theme perhaps first put forward by Milton's great eighteenth-century editor Thomas Newton: "[T]he subject of these two last books of the Paradise Lost is history rather than poetry," which leads Milton to "fidelity and strict attachment to the truth of Scripture history, and the reduction of so many and such various events into so narrow a compass."[21] This is a claim echoed in William Poole's recent suggestion that the visionary mode of books 11 and 12 feels so different from the epic mode of earlier books primarily because Michael "stick[s] quite closely to biblical text as he works through major Old Testament persons and events in order."[22] Critics who emphasize the shift from epic to history, from scriptural dilation to scriptural fidelity, from the "affable archangel" (7.41) Raphael to "solemn and sublime" (11.236) Michael, from the possibilities of unfallen life to the inevitability of fallen exile, or from a first to a second narrative climax of the poem all seem to

me correct, and offer valuable reasons for why we should care about books 11 and 12 and understand their style as performing important expressive work. But I do not think these claims have gotten to the heart of why and how the style of the last books feels so fundamentally "altered"; as a totality, they feel both more compacted and more accelerated than any other passages of exposition earlier in the poem.

My hypothesis is that these two experiences I have articulated are related, that my sense of the force and significance of the image of Adam "astonied" while "all his joints relaxed" relates to my, my students', and many critics' continued experience of the final books of *Paradise Lost* as, to use Lewis's lumpy phrase, an "untransmuted lump." Though Lewis meant this judgment as an insult, perhaps suggesting that books 11 and 12 should be lopped off like a stony growth, I want to take his phrase literally, and propose that there is something self-consciously lumpy—at once stone-like and relaxed—about these final books of *Paradise Lost*, that their untransmuted lumpiness is a consequence of a process of petrification and loosening that the body of the poem undergoes after the fall. I will describe this alteration of style in more detail later in the essay. For now, I propose a homology, though one temporally out of joint, between Adam astonied, with joints relaxed, and the petrification and relaxing of the joints of Milton's verse in the last two books.[23]

In making this argument, I am building on the best account I know of the difference between the end of *Paradise Lost* and what came before, which does not explain away the significance of this difference by settling on the old distinctions I enumerate above. In the coda to *Inside Paradise Lost: Reading the Designs of Milton's Epic*, David Quint draws a connection between the structure of *Paradise Lost* and Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (composed in 1629 and published first in 1645), arguing that Milton represents Eden after the fall as at risk of becoming a site of cult worship (especially in Adam's fantasy of having turned Eden into a museum of worship—part Catholic church, part Apollonian oracular shrine—at 11.317–33) and thus requires its destruction. Quint's point is deeper than this, though, because he sees Eden as "an image of the poem itself": "in the loss of the garden, Milton's epic depicts the relinquishing of its own imaginative plenitude and riches, the end of epic poetry itself."[24] The displacement and transformation of Eden in book 11 into "an island salt and bare" (11.834) "implies a willed foregoing of the imaginative riches of the poem that has gone before. . . . Now the lost Paradise that could only be summoned up by poetry has been emptied out as

the epic reaches its end."[25] For Quint, the shift in style at the end of the poem is an immanent critique of the earlier books' generic identification with epic and their investment in imaginative excess. The poem, in this interpretation, "appears to have consumed its tradition and genre," and Quint reads the "impoverishment" of style in the final books as according with "the severer Protestant practice of hearing the word of God [in book 12]."[26]

As that last quotation from Quint makes clear, there is an obstacle in my attempt to build on Quint's argument. The stylistic shift that Quint is focused on is really the one that takes place between books 11 and 12 themselves: "The desolation of Eden coincides with the shift in Michael's mode of exposition (12.8–11) from the visions that he has presented to Adam to sparer narration, a shift that aesthetically divides the once composite books 11 and 12."[27] Quint's argument about this shift in narration between books 11 and 12 is brilliant and persuasive, but in my experience, and in the experience of my students, the shift to books 11 and 12 more generally, rather than the shift from book 11 to book 12 alone, is just as—if not more—deeply felt at the level of poetic style and rhythm. There, in a real sense, the immanent overcoming of imaginative luxuriousness, which Quint claims Milton's poem undergoes in book 12, is already underway. If for Quint Eden's evolution from a place that calls for the poem's most luxurious poetic descriptions to an island salt and bare is an image of the poem's stylistic change across books 11 and 12, then my image for the shift that happens soon after the fall, and is felt most fully in books 11 and 12 more generally, is Adam astonied.[28]

Why take Adam astonied as a metapoetic sign of the poem's shifting experiment with versification after the fall? That there might be a relationship at all between Adam astonied and the verse style of the last books of *Paradise Lost* struck me first in a passage that depicts Adam somehow registering, in his body, the effects of Eve's fall even before he sees her and hears her story. Just after Adam has finished weaving Eve's garland, her fall hits him like a shock wave, a phenomenal experience of the world's new fallen—or falling—disharmony:

> Adam the while
> Waiting desirous her return had wove
> Of choicest flow'rs a garland to adorn
> Her tresses and her rural labors crown
> As reapers oft are wont their harvest queen.
> Great joy he promised to his thoughts and new
> Solace in her return so long delayed.

> Yet oft his heart, divine of something ill,
> Misgave him: he the falt'ring measure felt
> And forth to meet her went the way she took
> That morn when first they parted.
>
> (9.838–48)

Like Petrarch's self-involving tendency to speak to his own "thoughts" as though they were a separate being, Adam is promising great joy to his thoughts, feeling fairly optimistic about his reconciliation with Eve.[29] The rhythm of presence and absence, pleasure and deferral, that Adam takes solace in seems to echo his positive experience of Eve's usual "sweet reluctant amorous delay" (4.311).[30] But that "yet oft" begins to revise everything, like a volta: then we realize that his self-promises of joy and new solace are repeatedly punctuated by his heart's misgiving, which, in a noticeably ungrammatical clause, divines something ill. (Perhaps, too, the pain of the poem's theodicy—that something divine will come of this ill—is felt in the pulse of the ungrammatical.)[31] The relationship between "Yet oft his heart, divine of something ill, / Misgave him"—seemingly an internal experience—and "he the falt'ring measure felt"—the registration of something externally sensed—remains tantalizingly unspecified.[32] This simple parataxis, a marked departure from Milton's usually involuted syntax, offers no explicit explanation.[33] Milton's typical complex syntax would likely suggest the ambiguity of that relationship, whereas parataxis implies these two things could have simply happened simultaneously, or one after the other, without any necessary involvement. Gordon Teskey, in the edition I quote, places a colon between the two clauses, suggesting to modern readers that "he the falt'ring measure felt" actually does explain or expand on the image of the heart's misgiving, glossed as an experience of arrhythmia. The 1667 and 1674 editions both use a semicolon ("Yet oft his heart, divine of ſomthing ill, / Miſgave him; hee the faultring meaſure felt;" [9.845–46]), and though semicolons had a more flexible use in seventeenth-century printing than they do now and could sometimes have the same implication as a colon does today, there is no reason that we should take the modern implications of Teskey's as authoritative.[34] Most other modern editors leave the semicolon, preserving the ambiguity of the parataxis. Nonetheless, most editors also understandably gloss the misgiving heart and the feeling of the faltering measure as intimately related. David Scott Kastan, for example, takes the faltering measure to be identical to the irregular beat of Adam's heart, presumably caused by or at least

related to the disordering of the rhythms of nature begun when Eve eats the apple and

> Earth felt the wound and Nature from her seat
> Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe
> That all was lost.
>
> (9.782–84)[35]

Alastair Fowler suggests this connection but leaves it usefully undecided, glossing "measure" as "rhythm [of his own heartbeats, or nature's 'signs of woe']."[36] In this passage, Eve's fall sends a disharmonizing tremor through the earth, and signs of woe appear; one of these signs might be Adam's misgiving heart, registering the seismic shock. (As I have mentioned, such an earth tremor will be repeated after Adam falls, though described in slightly different terms at 9.1000–1.)[37]

Kastan's and Fowler's claims seem right to me, and they are further supported by the fact that misgiving as *bad* giving will return soon after when Eve "*gave* him of that fair enticing fruit" (9.996, emphasis added), suggesting in retrospect that Eve's fall, transmitted like a shock wave, already "gave" something bad to Adam, a misgiving that will then be consummated when she gives him the fruit and he eats it.[38] Yet I want to suggest that the paratactic relationship between Adam's misgiving heart and his feeling the faltering measure creates a space for us to think about "measure" as a kind of poetic rhythm too. "The *measure* is English heroic verse without rhyme": this is, of course, the term Milton uses to describe the rhythm of his poem in the first sentence in his note, "The Verse," added to the fourth issue of the first edition of the poem in 1668, and he there goes on to figure poems in bodily terms, as entities that can be put into and liberated from "bondage": rhyme as shackles.[39] With Eve's fall, not only the rhythm of Adam's heart but also the rhythm of the poem falters. The original spelling and metrical position of "falt'ring" gives greater reason to suppose that Milton is thinking about his poem's rhythm faltering. In both the 1667 and 1674 versions of the poem, faltering is spelled "faultring," with the obvious pun on this fall being Eve's fault, but more interestingly, the elision of the second syllable (which modern editors often mark, but the original does not) calls our attention to the possibility that the line is, on some level, faltering, self-consciously displaying the work it takes to maintain rhythmic and syllabic regularity. Another way to put this is that Milton is using "faultring measure" to suggest that the poem is now newly self-conscious about its measure, with both estimation and traversal etymologically implied in the Latin *metior*. The attention

drawn to the labor to maintain this line's suspiciously regular iambic pentameter through elision reminds us that this faltering measure has been transmitted to Adam and to the verse itself through Eve's fall.[40] The next line further calls attention to the metrical appearance of regular pentameter with iambic monosyllables: "And forth to meet her went the way she took" reflects the evacuation of energy that both Adam and the verse seem to experience in their mutual—or perhaps sympathetic—faltering, as though iambic pentameter, especially articulated across those monosyllables, is in this instance the poem's own pained, exhausted sigh, an expressive sign of "something ill" wounding a poem whose lines tend more generally, in John Creaser's memorable phrase, to "show an incalculable variety of [rhythmic] movement."[41] Like Adam's body shortly later when he hears Eve's story, this is the verse momentarily astonied, its joints relaxed, at once rigid in its regularity and relaxed in its release from the tension required for Milton's rhythmically various lines. Such astonying and relaxing of verse will return in and as books 11 and 12.

And the pun on "faltering" returns us to the image of Adam astonied: there is a kind of fault line opened up in the earth itself by Eve's eating the apple, and here is where I want to dwell a bit longer on the question of Adam astonied before beginning to develop an account of the postlapsarian petrification of world and verse, since in both instances—in the faltering measure and in the astoniment—we see something like a temporary suspension of vitality in Adam's body before his fall. This moment of astonied relaxation is far indeed from what Timothy Harrison has called the feeling of the "pure activity of living" that we witness and perhaps experience in Adam's awakening, narrated in book 8, though the moments are intriguingly close in terms of narrative sequencing.[42] By contrast, the "falt'ring measure" shows us the presence of something like deathliness in Adam before he is technically capable of dying. To return to the scene of the crime: when Eve eats the apple, the first-named effect is not on her but the earth itself. At once totalizing and slight (a "sigh" is not a scream), Nature's "sighing through all her works," in part because of the sonic saturation of "sighing" and "signs" in line 783, feels like the site from which emerges the "falt'ring measure" that Adam experiences.[43] My analysis of these lines has been influenced by Daniel Shore's striking suggestion that Satan's trembling before his final temptation of Eve transmits a tremor to Eve herself:

She scarce had said, though brief, when now more bold
The Tempter but with show of zeal and love
To man and indignation at his wrong
New part puts on and as to passion moved
Fluctuates disturbed, yet comely, and in act
Raised as of some great matter to begin.
(9.664–69)

Demonstrating how trembling was a rhetorical tactic for producing affective contagion in Cicero and Quintilian, Shore argues that Satan's trembling, his "fluctuat[ion] disturbed," is an instrument of "mimetic transference"—a transference so efficacious that it stretches beyond Eve and beyond Adam and ultimately reaches the Earth itself, for "Earth trembled" after Adam ate the fruit, in an echo of Earth's feeling the wound and sighing after Eve ate it.[44] For good textual reasons, Shore insists that the process of "mimetic transference" of Satan's trembling remains "occult," but reminds us that Cicero and Quintilian often used the simile of a spark that begins a fire to describe this rhetorical influence.[45] I want to suggest, for the case of *Paradise Lost*, that an apt figure for the felt experience of Earth's sighing and trembling is a shock wave, invisible but still material, and that one sign of such transference is Adam's experiences of "falt'ring measure," a metrical change to the rhythm of the world itself that he feels before he knows of Eve's fall.[46] Registering in Adam's body as the misgiving of his heart, the "falt'ring measure" disfigures Adam's prelapsarian body and disharmonizes its relationship to that now-changed rhythm even before his fall. This faltering has its corollary in the slightly-later petrification of Adam when he sees Eve: his being astonied might be read as the consequence or the aftershock of *this* "falt'ring measure"—a doubling or dilating of the original experience of faltering he feels as Eve's fall sends a shockwave through the earth—as much as it is an experience of the explicit revelation of her fall.

The textual connection between Adam's astonying and feeling the faltering measure is subtle but crucial; it provides a plausible explanation for the momentary cessations of life within Adam's still-unfallen body, the first of which is presented to us as an event mimicked by meter (Adam's heart repeatedly misgiving as he feels the "falt'ring measure") and the second produced by synching our witnessing with Adam's self-emptying astoniment. My growing conviction is that we can see something important if we hold these moments together at least paratactically, and assume with Milton's editors that sometimes parataxis implies obscure causation or at least intervolution—that the

faltering measure introduces a momentary cessation of life of which Adam astonied is a consequence or an echo, extended temporally in either phenomenological or narrative terms. My conviction is deepened further by the astonishing proliferation of the language of petrification in the later books of *Paradise Lost.* The shock wave I have described—Satan transmits a deathly tremor to Eve that is then transmitted as a disharmonizing "falt'ring measure" through the Earth's sighs and to Adam when she falls, and that is felt further, and dwelled on longest, when Eve tells Adam of her fall—has cosmological consequences. Sin and Death's architectural work in book 10 illustrates this with literal rigor. Their labors intriguingly precede the unfallen angels' postlapsarian project to reorganize the created universe and shift the angles of relation between Earth, Sun, and stars. (Or at least they seem to precede the angels' labor, if it even happens; the entire description of their geometrical realignment is framed by the poet's repeated "Some say [. . .]" at 10.668 and 10.671.)[47] After Sin herself describes being drawn out of hell by something like a felt wave of "whatever," "or sympathy or some connatural force / Pow'rful at greatest distance" (10.245–47), she and Death set to work:

> Then both from out Hell gates into the waste
> Wide anarchy of chaos damp and dark
> Flew diverse and with pow'r (their pow'r was great)
> Hov'ring upon the waters. What they met
> Solid or slimy as in raging sea
> Tossed up and down together crowded drove
> From each side shoaling towards the mouth of Hell,
> As when two polar winds blowing adverse
> Upon the Cronian Sea together drive
> Mountains of ice that stop th' imagined way
> Beyond Petsora eastward to the rich
> Cathayan coast. The aggregated soil
> Death with his mace petrific, cold and dry,
> As with a trident smote and fixed as firm
> As Delos floating once. The rest his look
> Bound with Gorgonian rigor not to move
> And with asphaltic slime.
>
> (10.282–98)

This is a rigorously solid example of what Teskey has called allegorical "capture": "the materials of narrative are shown being actively subdued for the purposes of raising a structure of meaning."[48] Two personifications, Sin and Death, newly released from Hell, laboriously capture the "solid or slimy" stuff that exists as a part of chaos—and thus, according

to John Rumrich, as material potential for God's creation—and "shoal" and "crowd" it together in order, ultimately, to petrify it.[49] This petrific construction subdues the materials of chaos, providing the infrastructure for unfolding fully the narrative meaning and consequences of the fall, including Sin's becoming "habitual habitant" on Earth (10.588). As with Angus Fletcher's claim that personification allegory inclines toward the production of "topocosmic unity," in which individual entities are fixed in their places and encompassed in a larger whole, so here, in exaggerated form, are all the disparate and flexible elements of chaos in the cosmos fastened and rendered unmovable: there is the condensing and crowding of all that is solid or slimy; Death's mace petrific, which ossifies everything it touches, fixing it "firm"; and Death's look that binds everything else with "Gorgonian rigor" "not to move."[50] ("Fixing" something in place echoes descriptions of Adam and Eve's decisions to fall in book 9: "Fixed on the fruit" Eve gazes before she eats [9.735]; Adam "fixed [his] lot" with Eve before he does the same [9.952].)[51] The motif of petrific fixing and fastening continues as the bridge to Hell takes shape and personified Chaos is imprisoned:

> With pins of adamant
> And chains they made all fast: too fast they made
> And durable!
> . . . . . .
> On either side
> Disparted Chaos overbuilt exclaimed
> And with rebounding surge the bars assailed
> That scorned his indignation.
> (10.318–20, 415–18)

Chaos is made "durable," which is to say, etymologically, hard, petrified. We witness here the astonying of the cosmos, or at least the region of it where Chaos dwells, which seems to exist between and henceforth connect Hell and Earth. It is as though in the wake of the fall the "falt'ring measure" spreads throughout everything that exists and brings a deathly petrification with it—though in the works of Sin and Death, this petrification, like the astonying of Adam, seems antithetical to rot and decay. "All fast," "too fast," the cosmos is remade, pinned into durability. Hell is connected to Earth with a bridge fastened together with the petrified stuff of chaos, Chaos itself is imprisoned, and personification allegory—in the form of Sin and Death, but also now the incarcerated Chaos, the permanent arrest of unallegorized chaos—is loosed on the world, seeking to capture and petrify what had been, according to Raphael's account, the endlessly flexible potential

of matter to be "sublimed" and "refined" (5.483, 475).[52] The pun contained in the repetition of "fast" across the binding antimetabole ("they made all fast: too fast they made")—meaning both fastened into place, ossified, and also speedy, as in a slide that will move beings from Earth to Hell with maximum velocity—also looks ahead to one defining feature of the petrification of verse in books 11 and 12: the tension between, on the one hand, an acceleration of narrative and poetic rhythm and, on the other hand, a sense that things—including the future itself—have been entirely fixed in place, and that the narrative and verse have, in turn, contracted and ossified.[53] Thomas Newton had suggested that what defined the stylistic changes of books 11 and 12 is in part "the reduction of so many and such various events into so narrow a compass," and another way of putting this is that books 11 and 12, not unlike the allegorical poetics of Sin and Death, effect the kind of capture of the "many and such various events" of human history in order to make them fit into "so narrow a compass." The consequence is a verse in books 11 and 12 that is "all fast: too fast": both fastening everything into place, and thus to some extent petrific, and overwhelmingly rapid.[54]

As a material body in the world, the text of *Paradise Lost* also experiences the effects of this "falt'ring measure" as it is reenacted in the poem, and it undergoes a petrification in turn. Given the explicit presence of petrification over the course of book 10, it is perhaps not entirely surprising when we learn at the beginning of book 11 that Adam and Eve's hearts, ever since the fall, had been turning into stone, and are only softened after by God's grace:

> Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood
> Praying for from the mercy-seat above
> Prevenient grace descending had removed
> The stony from their hearts and made new flesh
> Regenerate grow instead that signs now breathed
> Unutterable which the spirit of prayer
> Inspired and winged for Heav'n with speedier flight
> Than loudest oratory. Yet their port
> Not of mean suitors nor important less
> Seemed their petition than when th' ancient pair
> In fables old, less ancient yet than these,
> Deucalion and chaste Pyrrha, to restore
> The race of mankind drowned before the shrine
> Of Themis stood devout.
>
> (11.1–14)

We see confirmed here the astonying of Adam and Eve that has taken place in the wake of Eve's, and then Adam's, fall. It is a familiar biblical figure from Ezekiel: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."[55] In this instance, it is prevenient grace that can remove the stony from their hearts, and, in the final direct mythological allusion after the fall, and the only epic simile in books 11 and 12 until the poem's final verse paragraph, Milton compares Adam and Eve to Deucalion and Pyrrha, who in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are the only survivors after the great deluge that ends the Bronze Age. Deucalion and Pyrrha throw stones over their shoulders that soften first into "form" (*formam*) in general; then, after becoming increasingly "milder" (*mitior*) in nature, they become like human sculptures emerging out of marble, and eventually are changed ("*versa est*"), on the outer layer at least, into flesh ("*in corporis*").[56]

Yet if the stoniness of Adam and Eve's hearts and bodies begins to relent and regenerate into flesh at the start of book 11, stoniness is not exactly behind us. The afterlife of petrification is also true to Ovid's version of the Deucalion and Pyrrha story. As Leonard Barkan has put it in his shrewd commentary, "Life in Ovid's poem, and in the whole tradition of metamorphic literature that he inspires, is in flux between stoniness and the life that may emerge from or dissolve into stone. Hence despite its hopefulness, the Deucalion and Pyrrha story ends with a reminder that the stone remains within us."[57] And indeed, Adam and Eve may begin to "relent" (10.940) when they forgive each other (from *re-lentare*, to make flexible or soft again) and then to "regenerate" at the start of book 11, changed from stone to new flesh, but it is nonetheless in the last two books that the petrification of language is most palpably felt by readers.[58] We are made to feel the stoniness of the verse, as fallen readers, more palpably after Adam and Eve get some relief from their own stony hearts but are also made to feel fully the consequences of their fall for all of history:[59] the petrification of the verse belatedly registers the ongoingness of the fall's astonying tremor even after regeneration becomes possible for Adam and Eve. But the delay between Adam's astoniment and what I am calling the homologous astonying of the verse in books 11 and 12 needs to be further explained. I noted earlier that the image of Adam astonied is not only metapoetic but also metareceptive, meaning that it appeals to readerly sympathy by standing in for readerly experience. The poem is trying there to make us feel something of what Adam feels and it is drawing attention to its own ability to do this in the link between the

faltering measure and the *punctum* of Adam astonied. The majority of books 11 and 12—in particular, the verse devoted to unfolding Michael's prophecy—are also metareceptive in a similar way, since we are witnessing Adam witness visions and then narrative that encapsulate all the effects of the fall in future history. Until Michael's prophecy, fallen Adam and Eve can sense the faltering measure of the world—read the "mute signs in nature" (11.194) of its disharmony. But with Michael's prophecy, Adam is made to see and palpably to feel the totality of the effects of the fall. (Perhaps Eve is too, but we do not know the extent of what she witnesses in her prophetic dream, described only obliquely at 12.610–23.) The petrification of the verse during Michael's prophecy, in turn, disharmonizes the poetic compositional process to chime with the world-disharmony that Adam is feeling most fully; this disharmonizing of the verse through its astonying makes the reader feel, in the grain of the verse, an extension of the sense of fixity and compression that Adam experiences as fallen history's inevitability. This is poetry that strives to replicate the experience it means to transmit.

Yet this petrification of the verse is framed by instances of Milton's grand style—especially this first verse paragraph in book 11 and the final verse paragraph in book 12, when Adam and Eve leave Eden—and I will devote the final part of this essay to the petrification of verse that takes place in between, and the significance of its framing. When I refer to Milton's grand style, I mean to allude to Christopher Ricks, and especially his concluding claim in *Milton's Grand Style* that the greatest stylistic achievement of *Paradise Lost* is "balance": "A balance that is not precarious and is the result of a strength manifesting itself in innumerable tiny, significant, internal movements" at the level of the line, the sentence, and the paragraph.[60] Though William Blake famously claimed that Milton "wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God," it seems to me that Milton himself fetters the body of the poem in books 11 and 12—not with the bondage of rhyming that he mentions in his prefatory note on the verse but rather with a petrification of the verse techniques that characterize his grand style.[61] By "petrification of the verse," I mean that my general experience of all but the very beginning and the very end of books 11 and 12 is that there is a contraction of the verse that feels like the astoniment of Adam—or the petrific fixing of Chaos—in rhythmic form. The astonying of the verse, the formal registration of the final books' untransmuted lumpiness, exists, in part, because of what I have already referred to as the "too fast" nature of books 11 and 12—so much telling is crammed into them, and delivered often with an ontological and moral fixity that

had not been present before, that it feels like the molecules have no space or kinetic energy to move around—and because of the marked reduction of Milton's characteristic use of sentences of extraordinary length, hypotaxis, enjambment, main verb deferral, epic simile, flexible prosodic arrangement, and the unusually stressed (prosodically and rhetorically) word "or." These elements are diminished significantly in books 11 and 12 and this difference seems to me an effect of the verse's astoniment despite the fact that Adam and Eve's hearts begin to have the stony removed from their hearts at the start of book 11. It is during this interval that they—and we—are now made to feel and to know the effects of the fall.

Part of Milton's justification for eschewing rhyme in *Paradise Lost* is that he wishes to have his verse embody and perform a maximum of liberty—and that liberty includes, but is not limited to, the elements of his characteristic style that I have briefly enumerated. It is worth recalling here William Kerrigan's suggestive account of the angel body as "the metaphor deep-rooted in *Paradise Lost* for the poem itself":

> Composing Book 3, its poet has actually visited heaven and "drawn Empyreal Air, / Thy tempering" (7.14–15), reclaiming in art the lost destiny of the human body. With the "sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another," its unobstructed lines forsake the "vexation, hindrance, and constraint" of rhyme, stanzaic pattern, gnomic syntax, and other restrained conveyances in the corpus of poetry. Elevating deliberation to the higher state of intuition, its unpremeditated flow joins earth and heaven. . . . Its parts are "condense or rare," enfolding the entirety with no loss in local concentration. It varies its body at will, dilating fact into metaphor and reintegrating metaphor into fact. It flies.[62]

Milton wants his lines and periods and verse paragraphs, to continue Kerrigan's conceit, to be as spiritually refined and flexible—as "soft / And uncompounded"—as angelic bodies, able to "execute their airy purposes" "in what shape they choose," "not tied or manacled with joint or limb" (1.424–30). After the fall, the language of the verse loses this softness. Within Milton's monist cosmos, it becomes less spiritous and more durable—petrified along with the universe. Though there are sentences and paragraphs in books 11 and 12 that are long and syntactically complex, they tend to lack what we might call, after the angels, an airy purpose, that radical freedom of micro- and macro-movements across verse sentences and paragraphs that generally define Milton's unmanacled style up through most of book 10. Likewise,

there are extraordinarily beautiful lines in books 11 and 12, but they tend to lead to Michael's revelations that beauty is idolatrous and should be denied, as with the invention of music (11.558–63) or the description of Eden destroyed (11.834–37). It would require another essay to detail the significance of all of these stylistic shifts in books 11 and 12. I will focus here on a few in particular: the change in rhythm at the level of the line, sentence, and paragraph; the diminution of enjambment; the marginalization of the Miltonic "or"; and the absence of epic simile.

As I have mentioned, Milton is explicit about Adam's verbal style altering already in book 9 after the fall, and we see this unfold especially in book 10 when, in another moment of "falt'ring" ("Whence Adam falt'ring long thus answered brief" [10.115]), Adam's admission of his fall to God unfolds across lines (10.115–43) that feel rhythmically contorted, not so much variously drawing out the sense from one line to the next—the enjambment there is reduced both in quantity and effect—as twisting it over the multiplying caesuras as Adam struggles with how to understand and explain what he has done. But such rhythmical alterations become more standard in books 11 and 12. The vision of the lazar-house in book 11 is a condensed—and therefore extreme—version of this effect:

> A lazar-house it seemed where were laid
> Numbers of all diseased, all maladies
> Of ghastly spasm or racking torture, qualms
> Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
> Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
> Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,
> Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy
> And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
> Marasmus and wide-wasting pestilence,
> Dropsies and asthmas and joint-racking rheums.
> (11.479–88)

There is a sense in which the rhythm of this sentence is determined by its piling on of symptoms, but the effect is in excess of other moments of listing in the poem. In this case, the rhythm makes the reader, like Adam in his vision, feel the claustrophobia of this house of suffering, the pain of the intestine stone, the difficulty of breathing caused by "dropsies and asthmas and joint-racking rheums." It is as if the caesuras themselves are meant to cause a momentary mimesis of asthma in the reader, the many pauses causing a renewed attention to the reader's respiration. These lines are indeed "joint-racking," partly

because they make visible the hardened joints of the poem that the multiplication of caesuras produces; what John Creaser has called *Paradise Lost*'s "unorthodox emphasis on enjambment, an overflow of semantic energy," is pointedly absent here.[63] Milton himself had made a diversity of enjambment—"the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another"—one of the characteristic features of "true musical delight" in his note on the verse of *Paradise Lost*.[64] The lazar-house sentence captures in exaggerated miniature these final books' tendency not to "draw out" the sense across many lines. Though I have not quantified the general difference, enjambment generally plays a less structurally significant part of the verse in books 11 and 12 than it is in previous books. When enjambment is present in these books, it feels less like what T. S. Eliot called the "breathless leap" created by Miltonic enjambment than a contained phenomenon not drawn out for more than a line or two, and not creating any serious delays in the readers' receipt of the syntactic or semantic movements of a sentence.[65] Passages like this, throughout books 11 and 12, no longer show the "overflow of semantic energy" that the poem's sentences had previously registered through the rhythmic "wave" (to use Eliot's term) created by long, enjambed verse sentences.[66] Instead, they reveal verse astonied. But as with Adam's astonied body, this is also, paradoxically, a relaxing of the joints of the poem, since the same tensile strength is not required for passages like this as it is for Milton's very long and enjambed sentences earlier in the poem (as in, for example, the poem's first sentence), which tend to hold subject and verb or vehicle and tenor apart at great distances.

Again, there are syntactically complex sentences in books 11 and 12. Take, for instance, what Thomas N. Corns has described as one of the poem's most syntactically elaborate sentences in terms of clausal structure, the conclusion of Michael's narration of human history:

> So shall the world go on,
> To good malignant, to bad men benign,
> Under her own weight groaning till the day
> Appear of respiration to the just
> And vengeance to the wicked at return
> Of Him so lately promised to thy aid,
> The woman's Seed, obscurely then foretold,
> Now amplier known thy Savior and thy Lord,
> Last in the clouds from Heav'n to be revealed
> In glory of the Father to dissolve
> Satan with his perverted world, then raise
> From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,

> New Heav'ns, new Earth, ages of endless date
> Founded in righteousness and peace and love
> To bring forth fruits' joy and eternal bliss.
> (12.537–51)

Corns is surely right that the reader's concentration is "taxed to its limit" by the sentence's stunning thirteen clauses: "conflagrant mass" indeed.[67] And yet, as Corns also notes, this sentence acts as a capstone to the "relentless tide of Michael's vision"; it is not, rhythmically or semantically, an unfolding of ambiguous possibility but a prophecy of future certainty.[68] Main verbs are not deferred, which makes each clause feel relatively contained, and so the sense of the sentence is painstakingly and linearly accretive rather than drawn out from line to line. This is verse of "respiration to the just" and thus appropriately, in the reading of it, offers a far more expansive rhythm of breathing than then lazar-house, but everything is still fixed in its place, fastened into durability, and all fast, too fast, the future is pinned into the certainty—the "just[ness]"—of eschatological history (even if it is here a fixity of eternal bliss, with purging and refining articulated in the past tense).

In addition to the rhythmic complexity produced by the syntactic propulsion of Milton's vast co-ordinations of line, sentence, and verse paragraph, another instrument that produces the wondrous tensile strength in many of Milton's most complex poetic sentences earlier in the poem is his idiosyncratic use of "or"—also absent from Michael's final narration—which Peter Hermann has argued is a crucial component in *Paradise Lost*'s cultivation of "incertitude."[69] At key moments in nearly every book before the last two, *Paradise Lost* sustains alternative interpretive possibilities with this conjunction. Sometimes these are local and do not seem to have crucial significance—perhaps we do not need to know, for instance, if "the Tuscan artist" views the moon "from the top of Fesolè, / Or in Valdarno" (1.288–90)—but sometimes Milton's "or" holds open very important interpretive questions. It does, for example, seem important for Milton and his readers to find out if "holy Light" is "offspring of Heav'n, first-born, / Or of th' Eternal co-eternal beam" (3.1–2), or if it is ultimately impossible to know: "Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream / Whose foundation who shall tell?" (3.7–8). "Or" plays no such role throughout most of books 11 and 12, and sometimes its use seems, on the contrary, to show how possibilities are foreclosed, as in Michael's description of good deaths: whether a temperate life ends by dropping, "like ripe fruit," "into thy mother's lap or be with ease / Gathered, not harshly

plucked, for Death mature" (11.535–37), Adam will unequivocally get old and die. "Or" no longer sustains ambiguity, which is another way of saying that the diminution of suspensive uses of "or" in books 11 and 12 makes these sections of the poem more like Adam's astonied body, registering a premonition of death, than like an angel's body, which is defined through a proliferation of "or"s: "but in what shape they choose, / Dilated or condensed, bright or obscure" (1.428–29).[70]

One could say the same about Milton's use of epic simile, also notably absent from most of books 11 and 12, except for the beginning of 11 and end of 12.[71] (Their absence from book 12—except for the very end—may be an effect of Milton's self-conscious overcoming of epic poetry, as Quint argues, but they are not present in book 11 either, except for the first lines.) Epic similes also have an effect on the rhythm of *Paradise Lost* at the level of narrative and of verse sentence and paragraph; if epic similes have a tendency, through dilation, to extend and slow down time, their absence seems necessary for the "all fast: too fast" nature of books 11 and 12.[72] Likewise, epic simile in the poem tends also to create multiple interpretive possibilities—perhaps most famously, but by no means exclusively, in the similes that introduce us to the fallen angels in book 1 (see especially 1.299–313, two similes connected by one of those Miltonic "or"s). I take the near-total absence of epic similes in books 11 and 12 as additional evidence of the astonying of the body of the poem.

I would propose, further, that it is only after Michael introduces Adam and Eve to the concept of the "paradise within thee, happier far" (12.587), that the verse regenerates—in the sense of being made new, having the stony removed from its rhythm. Those final, magnificent similes, which depict the angels' expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden (the angels glide "meteorous as evening mist"; the sword of God blazes before the fallen couple "fierce as a comet" [12.629–36]) and reintroduce a wondrous degree of interpretive ambiguity, along with a marked increase in enjambment, are perhaps only possible in the wake of the revelation of the paradise within, the cultivation of which works as a continual fight against the petrifying effects of death-in-life.[73]

I have suggested that Eve's fall sends out a disharmonizing shock wave that affects Adam, the Earth, and the verse by way of the "falt'ring measure," that this "falt'ring measure" causes a petrification of Eve's and Adam's hearts, the universe, and the language of the poem itself, which the final books immanently register. Milton makes the reader endure this petrification both formally in the poem's last two books

and by watching what happens to the universe and to Adam and Eve's linguistic and historical possibilities, in order to make that much more powerfully felt the effects of grace that begin the process of the verse's de-petrification at the very end of the poem. It is only with the revelation of the paradise within that the poem can again become unfixed and unfastened, make a meteor seem as airy as gentle evening mist, render the stony soft and flexible again, and return the verse to its relenting, liberated past—and future.

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NOTES

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[1] Originally published as ten books in 1667, *Paradise Lost* was turned into twelve books in its 1674 edition. On important changes, see William Poole, *Milton and the Making of Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2017), 161–71.

[2] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Gordon Teskey (New York: Norton, 2005), 10.890. Hereafter cited parenthetically by book and line number. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from *Paradise Lost* are from this text. I have in each case compared Teskey's edition with the 1674 text and will occasionally cite that; it is reproduced in *John Milton's Complete Poetical Works* (facsimile ed.), vol. 3, ed. Harris Francis Fletcher (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1948).

[3] On Edmund Spenser's obsession with "stounds" and "astonying," see Jeff Dolven, "Panic's Castle," *Representations* 120.1 (2012): 1–16; and Giulio Pertile, *Feeling Faint: Affect and Consciousness in the Renaissance* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 2019), 63–93. Though this is the only time "astonied" is used in *Paradise Lost*, "astonished" or "astonishment" repeatedly describes the situation of the fallen angels at 1.264–66; 1.316–8; 2.420–3; 6.838–40. Other moments represent the symptoms of astonishment without using the term: see, for example, 11.263–5; 11.419–20; 9.463–5. The last instance, when Satan watches Eve before he tempts her, offers the closest echo of Adam's "astonied stood":

> That space the evil one abstracted stood
> From his own evil and for the time remained
> Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed.
>
> (9.463–65)

Both the astonying of Adam and the abstracting of Satan show each character having an experience that seems impossible for them: Adam feels something like dying before death arrives in Eden, and Satan feels himself being "stupidly good" after his unredeemable fall. On Satan "thunder-struck," see John Rogers, "*Paradise Regained* and the Memory of *Paradise Lost*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton* (Oxford: Oxford

Univ. Press, 2009), 605. I am indebted to Ryan Campagna for encouraging me to think more about the importance of elision and contraction.

[4] See Thomas N. Corns, *Milton's Language* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), 40. See also John Creaser, "'Service is Perfect Freedom': Paradox and Prosodic Style in *Paradise Lost*," *The Review of English Studies* 58.235 (2007): 268–315, particularly 305, on Milton's flexible caesura placement.

[5] *OED*, s.v., "astone | astun, v.," Etymology.

[6] For a compelling analysis of the significance of Milton's use of "relaxed" in relationship to Virgilian *solvere* and Homeric *luein*, "the epic verbs used to describe limbs that relax, loosen, or dissolve, either in fear of or in the throes of death," see Joshua Scodel, "Edenic Freedoms," *Milton Studies* 56 (2015): 182. Alastair Fowler notes both the biblical and Virgilian resonances of "astonied" in Job 17:8 (the KJV reads "Upright men shall be astonied at this," with the Hebrew term, שמם, suggesting a state of being appalled or stunned [*The Holy Bible* (London, 1612)]) and Virgil's *Aeneid* 2.120–21: "obstipuere animi, gelidusque per ima cucurrit / ossa tremor" (*Virgil: Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1–6*, trans. H. R. Fairclough [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999]). See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Fowler (London: Routledge, 2013), 521, n.890. In the background we might further hear Petrarch's play with *attono* in his ekphrasis of Rome in the *Africa*: "Inde sedentes / Attoniti siluere diu," Petrarch, *L'Afrique: 1338–1374*, trans. Rebecca Lenoir (Grenoble: Éditions Jérôme Millon, 2002), 8.954–55.

[7] Sharon Achinstein, "Milton's Political Ontology of the Human," *ELH* 83.3 (2017): 591. For an idiosyncratic analysis of Medusa's literal presence in *Paradise Lost* as a guardian of Lethe, see James Dougal Fleming, "Meanwhile, Medusa in *Paradise Lost*," *ELH* 69.4 (2002): 1009–28.

[8] Dante's *Rime Petrose*, 1.12–13, in *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyric*, trans. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979). On the crystalline stoniness of the form of the *rime petrose*, see Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez, *Time and the Crystal: Studies in Dante's Rime Petrose* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990), 138–64. The relevance of earlier love poetry to this scene is made apparent by the fact that Adam's first thought after being astonied is that Eve has cheated on him with death: "How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost, / Defaced, deflow'red, and now to death devote?" (9.900–1). Thanks to Ramsey McGlazer for recommending Dante's relevance.

[9] Compare Lauren Berlant's commentary on Bergson's definition of laughter as a "momentary anesthesia of the heart": "The sheer impact of a thing induces a suspension of self-encounter where breathing, noticing, and not knowing happen so that an alien concept or world can begin to be metabolized, to become different and intimate." "A Momentary Anesthesia of the Heart," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 28.3 (2015): 274.

[10] It may also be relevant that Milton's blindness, at the start of book 3, ultimately comes to seem to him an opportunity for a greater calling, his "irradiat[ion]" by God's divine light. Likewise, Adam's experience of exile from life and nature here—and especially after he himself falls—will be compensated by "a paradise within thee, happier far" (12.587). I will return to the relationship between petrification and this paradise within at the end of this essay.

[11] Compare John Wilkinson's comments on what he calls the "threshold artwork, where the threat of petrification is countermanded by a discrepant rhythm of life, engenders a hermeneutic enlivening." John Wilkinson, "Stone thresholds," *Textual Practice* 31.4 (2017): 632. On how moments of insentience in Renaissance literature

can reveal figures of consciousness divorced from personal identity, see Timothy M. Harrison, "Personhood and Impersonal Feeling in Montaigne's 'De l'exercitation,'" *Modern Philology* 114 (2016): 219–242; and Pertile.

[12] *Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey (London: Longman, 1997), 126–7. See my "Weak Milton," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 57.1 (2017): 115–20, for a reading of the significance of "astonishment" in "On Shakespeare." See also Samson's sense of himself as burial stone at the beginning of Milton's (arguably) final poem (*Samson Agonistes*, line 102: "Myself, my sepulcher a moving grave"), an image perhaps echoed in Manoa's final bid to turn Samson after his death into a "monument" (line 1734).

[13] "Metareceptive" is the term Ellen MacKay helpfully suggested to me could describe this moment. On Adam as exemplar of "innocent insight," see Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2010), 2.

[14] Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 62.

[15] *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vol. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), 3:455.

[16] John Milton, *Paradise Lost: Books XI-XII*, ed. Michael Hollington with Lawrence Wilkinson (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), 9.

[17] Joseph H. Summers, "The Final Vision," in *Milton: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Louis L. Martz (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 183.

[18] C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1942), 129

[19] Lewis's assessment is worth quoting at length:

> It [the poem's value as a whole] suffers from a grave structural flaw. Milton, like Virgil, though telling a short story about the remote past, wishes our minds to be carried to the later results of that story. But he does this less skillfully than Virgil. Not content with following his master in the use of occasional prophecies, allusions, and reflections, he makes his two last books into a brief outline of sacred history from the Fall to the Last Day. Such an untransmuted lump of futurity, coming in a position so momentous for the structural effect of the whole work, is inartistic. And what makes it worse is that the actual writing in this passage is curiously bad. (C. S. Lewis, 129).

[20] See Stanley Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1990), 247–93.

[21] Thomas Newton, *The Poetical Works of John Milton,* 2 vol., ed. Edward Hawkins (London, 1824), 2:384.

[22] Poole, *Milton and the Making of Paradise Lost*, 163. See also John Rogers's thoughtful claim about the stylistic difference between *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, a difference that he also implicitly applies to books 1–10 and books 11–12 of *Paradise Lost* itself: "This poet has clipped his long, wandering sentences into shorter, less equivocal declarations, replacing the lush polyvalence of the epic similes that so marked the ornamental quality of *Paradise Lost* with the puritan austerity of simple argument and statement of fact." "*Paradise Regained* and the Memory of *Paradise Lost*," 590. In an influential earlier account, Robert Entzminger similarly claims that the "muted style" of books 11 and 12 adheres to "an important convention of Puritan hagiographical writings": "the medium does not call attention to itself because it sought to be perfectly transparent, absorbed as fully as possible into the content." Robert L. Entzminger, "Michael's Options and Milton's Poetry: *Paradise Lost* XI and XII," *English Literary Renaissance*, 8.2 (1978): 208. As I will suggest, the verse of books 11 and 12 does call attention to itself through its difference from the proceeding books.

[23] Though my focus on the phenomenology of astoniment generally precludes prolonged engagement with the broader and more extensively studied topic of Milton's materialist monism, we might also think of the astonying of Adam's body and of Milton's verse as a kind of spiritual condensation, a significant (but not necessarily permanent) downturn in the "various degrees / Of substance" with which both have been "endued," perhaps making Adam's body and then the verse's body, in the interim, less "refined," less "spiritous and pure" (5.473–5). I allude here to the material gradations described in Raphael's "one first matter all" speech, which many scholars take to articulate Milton's own monist cosmology in which everything, always changing, has the capacity to become more or less "spiritous." For the most influential analysis of Raphael's speech, see Stephen M. Fallon, *Milton among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), 102–7. In his discussion of how Anne Conway makes explicit Milton's implication that "even supposedly 'inanimate' objects are 'instinct with spirit,'" Fallon suggestively proposes that "every stone is a condensed spirit waiting to come to life" (121). Adam's body and Milton's verse can also come back to life after petrification.

[24] David Quint, *Inside Paradise Lost: Reading the Designs of Milton's Epic* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2014), 235–6.

[25] Quint, 245.

[26] Quint, 246–7.

[27] Quint, 245. With this claim, Quint is drawing on—but rendering significantly more sophisticated—a tradition that perhaps begins with Addison: "To give my opinion freely, I think that the exhibiting part of the history of mankind in vision, and part in narrative, is as if an history painter should put in colors one half of his subject, and write down the remaining part of it." *The Spectator*, 3:455. Quint, of course, inverts Addison's valuation, taking the "sparer narration" of book 12 to be an achievement of the poem's iconoclastic self-overcoming. For a criticism of Addison's position on the last two books generally, and this comment on the divide between books 11 and 12 in particular, see Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, "Structure and the Symbolism of Vision in Michael's Prophecy, *Paradise Lost*, Books XI-XII," *Philological Quarterly*, 42.1 (1963): 25–35.

[28] Quint's argument has the advantage of the simultaneity of the representation of Eden's ruination and the shift between books 11 and 12, which my proposed images lacks. I explain the significance of the temporal disjunction between the representation of Adam astonied and the astonying of the verse below.

[29] See, for example, *Rime* 32, line 5: "I' dico a' miei pensier" (I say to my thoughts).

[30] For the swaying ambiguities of this first description of Eve in book 4 and her relationship to delay, see Stephen B. Dobranski, "Clustering and Curling Locks: The Matter of Hair in *Paradise Lost*," *PMLA* 125.2 (2010): 337–53.

[31] Richard Strier helped me see just how peculiar "divine of something ill" is. On the difficulties of theodicy for the poem more generally, see Strier, "Milton's Fetters, or, Why Eden is Better than Heaven," *Milton Studies* 38 (2000): 169–197.

[32] Pertile has insightfully suggested to me in private correspondence that "the idea of a shock wave that is transmitted cosmically and felt somatically before it is registered in consciousness" makes Adam's experience at this moment especially Spenserian, resonating with the scene in book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* where Redcrosse is "astownd" by the earthquake that takes place after the knight of holiness makes "goodly court" to Duessa and Orgoglio emerges as consequence:

Till at the last he heard a dreadfull sownd,
Which through the wood loud bellowing, did rebownd,
That all the earth for terror seemd to shake,
And trees did tremble. Th'Elfe therewith astownd [. . .].

(Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton [Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007], 1.7.7).

For fuller analysis of Redcrosse's "stound," see Pertile, 67–79.

[33] For a useful quantification and analysis of Milton's syntax across his poetic works, see Corns, 15–25.

[34] See Vivian Salmon, "Early Seventeenth-Century Punctuation as a Guide to Sentence Structure," *The Review of English Studies* 13.52 (1962): 347–60. On Teskey's commentary on punctuation, including why not to trust the punctuation of the two editions of *Paradise Lost* published in Milton's lifetime (most likely the work not of Milton but of copyists and printers), see xii in the preface to his edition of the poem, and the somewhat more elaborate discussion in Teskey, *The Poetry of John Milton* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2015), 553–55. A particularly persuasive case for preserving the punctuation of seventeenth-century editions of *Paradise Lost* is Dobranski, "Editing Milton: The Case Against Modernization," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*, ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 480–95.

[35] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. David Scott Kastan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005), 292, note to line 846.

[36] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Fowler, 519, note on line 846.

[37] Milton's representation of the fall's disharmonizing of the world echoes the explicitly musical representation of the fall found in Du Bartas's account; see *The Divine Weeks and Works of Guillaume de Saluste, Sieur du Bartas*, 2 vol., trans. Joshua Sylvester, ed. Susan Snyder (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), 1:358–59. Thanks to Tim Harrison for bringing me back to Du Bartas and refining my thinking about disharmony.

[38] See *OED*, s.v., "misgive, v.," 4: "to give wrongly or improperly" (with instances from 1611 and 1639–40). On the connection between Adam's misgiving heart and Eve giving him the fruit, see Christopher Ricks, *The Force of Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 67–68. Scodel, 181–89, is especially illuminating on the question of whether we should read Adam's fall as a free choice.

[39] *Paradise Lost,* ed. Teskey, 2, emphasis added. Milton's injunction, in *An Apology against a Pamphlet call'd A modest Confutation of the Animadversions upon the Remonstrant against Smectymnuus*, that one has to make one's embodied self "a true Poem, that is, a composition, and patterne of the best and honourablest things" in order to write well is also resonant here for thinking about bodies as poems and poems as bodies. See *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vol., ed. Don M. Wolfe (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953–82), 1:890. Metaphors about poems' bodies gain popularity in the debates about rhyme in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which Milton may be recasting. See, for example, Thomas Campion's comparison of rhyme (especially in sonnets) to Procrustes's torturous stretching and compacting of prisoners' bodies in *Observations in the Art of English Poesy* (1602), in *Sidney's 'The Defence of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 284. On *Paradise Lost* as an embodied entity within a monist universe, see Beverley Sherry, "Milton, Materialism, and the Sound of *Paradise Lost*," *Essays in Criticism* 60.3 (2010): 220–41, and Thomas Festa, "Milton's Sensuous Poetics: On the Material Texts of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 59 (2017): 91–124.

[40] Festa speculates that "Milton may well have learned from Spenser" the technique of using "exceptionally, even garishly, regular iambic verse" to express a "riddling" or "mesmerizing quality to a thought" (15).

[41] See John Creaser, "The Line in *Paradise Lost*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), 81–93, especially 84–85; and also Creaser, "'A Mind of Most Exceptional Energy': Verse Rhythm in *Paradise Lost*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*: "Approximate though such figures inevitably are, it is worth recording that a passage of 200 lines [in *Paradise Lost*] will contain on average 166 deviations—promotions, demotions, pairings, and their line-turn variations—decidedly more than in earlier writers of narrative blank verse. In effect, five lines out of six are liable to be in some way deviant," 492. For a survey of the history of debate about the significance of monosyllabic lines in *Paradise Lost*, see John Leonard, *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of Paradise Lost, 1667–1970, Volume I: Style and Genre* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 36. Jeff Dolven helped me consider the relationship between iambic pentameter and enervation in these lines.

[42] Timothy M. Harrison, "Adamic Awakening and the Feeling of Being Alive in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 54 (2013): 56.

[43] Sin is associated with signs on her first appearance in heaven as well, when (in Sin's account to Satan) the angels "called me 'Sin' and for a sign / Portentous held me" (2.760–61). On earth, sin's signs are felt before Sin herself (the personification) arrives.

[44] Daniel Shore, *Milton and the Art of Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), 119, 123–24.

[45] Shore cites, for example, Cicero's *De Oratore, Books I and II*, trans. E. W. Sutton, ed. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), book 2, section 45, where the orator's passion is the spark that inflames the minds of the audience.

[46] Recent work in musicology echoes my interests in Milton's poetics of shock wave and tremor by revealing a more general seventeenth-century fascination with how vibrations—in particular musical vibrations—had the ability "to alter directly the kinetics of heart and spirit." See Bettina Varwig, "Heartfelt Musicking: The Physiology of a Bach Cantata," in *Representations* 143 (2018): 47. On Satan's musical and meteorological transmission in *Paradise Lost*, see Katherine Cox, "'How cam'st thou speakable of mute': Satanic Acoustics in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 57 (2016): 233–60. The early Renaissance study of earthquakes and their shocks, especially in sixteenth-century Italy, is surveyed in Craig Martin, *Renaissance Meteorology: Pomponazzi to Descartes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2011), 60–79. In the context of the English Civil War, Gerard Passannante studies the earthquake as a metaphor for political upheaval (and the catastrophic thinking it can provoke and be provoked by) in *Catastrophizing: Materialism and the Making of Disaster* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2019), 169–187.

[47] On this ambiguity and others in the reordering of the created universe, see Poole, *Milton and the Making of Paradise Lost*, 179–82. See also Dennis Danielson, *Paradise Lost and the Cosmological Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), 129–53.

[48] Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), 23. See also Fred Hoerner, "'Fire to Use': A Practice-Theory Approach to *Paradise Lost*," *Representations* 51 (1995): 103–6, on Sin and Death's labor as a kind of allegorical poetics. On competing ideas of sympathy in *Paradise Lost*, see Seth Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy: Magic, Philosophy, and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2015), 110–97. Lobis comments suggestively that "Sin and Satan's sympathetic pulse sounds in precise counterpoint to Adam's arrhythmia" (150).

[49] See John P. Rumrich, *Milton Unbound: Controversy and Reinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 118–46, and John Rumrich, "Of Chaos and Nightingales," in *Living Texts: Interpreting Milton*, ed. Kristin A. Pruitt and Charles W. Durham (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna Univ. Press, 2000), 218–27. Tzachi Zamir's compelling claim that Milton's Death is represented in *Paradise Lost* as the "force eroding structure," waging a "war . . . against form," overlooks Death's form-giving labors in book 10 (Tzachi Zamir, *Ascent: Philosophy and Paradise Lost* [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2018], 76, 72).

[50] Angus Fletcher, *The Prophetic Moment. An Essay on Spenser* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), 52. I am somewhat repurposing Fletcher's evocative term here; his concerns are more with the simultaneity of fixity and flux. Perhaps, though, both terms are relevant for Sin and Death's project, since their petrific construction ultimately makes possible the bridge by which they can travel quickly between Hell and Earth.

[51] On the dangers of "fix[ation]" in *Paradise Lost*, see David Carroll Simon, *Light without Heat: The Observational Mood from Bacon to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2018), 199–200.

[52] See Rumrich, on the imprisoning of Chaos and the imposition of "a created order on his realm: the tyrannically oppressive, ontologically shriveled structure of evil" (*Milton Unbound*, 126).

[53] Conversation with Ted Tregear helped me consider the significance of "all fast: too fast."

[54] Newton, 2:384.

[55] Ezekiel 36:26, KJV.

[56] Ovid, *Metamorphoses I*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), 1.400–10.

[57] Leonard Barkan, "'Living Sculptures': Ovid, Michelangelo, and the *Winter's Tale*," *ELH* 48.4 (1981): 643. See Ovid, 1.414–15.

[58] For a persuasive analysis of the language of softening and obduracy in *Paradise Lost*, see Mandy Green, "'Softening the Stony': Eve and the Process of Spiritual Regeneration," in *Milton's Ovidian Eve* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 181–208. Leah Whittington deftly analyzes the postures that choregraph such relenting at the end of *Paradise Lost* in *Renaissance Suppliants: Poetry, Antiquity, Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015), 176–92.

[59] Though such stoniness still remains a possibility within Adam, Eve, and their progeny, as Barkan reminds us with Deucalion and Pyrrha, not only in the future astonying of the hearts of the unfaithful but also in stony growths like "intestine stones," explicitly named as one of the effects of the fall at 11.484.

[60] Christopher Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 150. In this summary comment, I take Ricks to be building on the nineteenth-century scholar John Addington Symonds, who in an essay on "Blank Verse" comments on Milton's prosody:

> So dependent is sound on sense, and so inextricably linked together are the periods in a complex structure of blank verse. It not infrequently happens that a portion at least of the sound belonging to a word at the commencement of a verse is owed to the cadence of the preceding lines, so that the strain of music which begins is wedded to that which dies, by indescribable and almost imperceptible interpenetrations. ("Appendix: Blank Verse," in *Sketches and Studies in Italy* [London, 1879], 419).

Despite T. S. Eliot's dislike for Milton, he is also attuned to the maximally flexible interrelations of line, sentence, and paragraph in Milton's verse, at least in those books of *Paradise Lost* in which the "grand style" is active:

> It is only in the period that the wave-length of Milton's verse is to be found: it is his ability to give a perfect and unique pattern to every paragraph, such that the full beauty of the line is found in its context, and his ability to work in larger musical units than any other poet—that is to me the most conclusive evidence of Milton's supreme mastery. The peculiar feeling, almost a physical sensation of a breathless leap, communicated by Milton's long periods, and by his alone, is impossible to procure from rhymed verse. ("Milton," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 33 (1947), 72–3).

[61] William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: In Full Color* (New York: Dover, 1994), 30.

[62] William Kerrigan, *Sacred Complex: On the Psychogenesis of Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), 260.

[63] Creaser, "The Line in *Paradise Lost*," 89.

[64] *Paradise Lost*, ed. Gordon Teskey, 2.

[65] For moments of contained enjambment in book 11, where the sense can barely be said to be drawn out, see, for example.: 11.141–6 and 11.193–200 (before Michael's arrival), along with 11.371–84 and 11.385–411 (just after Michael's arrival and before his lesson begins).

[66] Eliot, "Milton," 72–73; Creaser, "The Line in *Paradise Lost*," 89. Other exemplary instances of this effect—minimal enjambment, lurching rhythm—include sentences beginning at 11.683, 11.719, 12.256, 12.504, and 12.575. This is a different effect than those instances in which, as Archie Burnett describes it, Milton's verse "can creep along" in order to increase dramatic "eventfulness"; "'Sense Variously Drawn Out': The Line in *Paradise Lost*," *Literary Imagination: The Review of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics* 5.1 (2003): 78–79.

[67] Thomas N. Corns, *Milton's Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 29.

[68] Corns, 29. J. K. Barret studies the tension between future certainty and new potential in the final books in *Untold Futures: Time and Literary Culture in Renaissance England* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2016), 209–23.

[69] See Peter C. Herman, "*Paradise Lost*, the Miltonic 'Or,' and the Poetics of Incertitude," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 43.1 (2003): 181–211; and more generally N. K. Sugimura, on how "the very act of writing verse" for Milton led so many of his sentences in *Paradise Lost* to create unresolved but productive tensions between alternative philosophical and theological possibilities, in *"Matter of Glorious Trial": Spiritual and Material Substance in Paradise Lost* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2009), xiv.

[70] On the (incomplete) suppression of ambiguity in the last two books of *Paradise Lost* more generally, see John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1998), 144–76.

[71] There are a few condensed similes that work more as embellishment then dilation (see for example, 11.129 and 11.247). These provoke no real interpretive ambiguity; they keep tenor and vehicle tightly knit together.

[72] For an analysis of simile's local extension of time and the poetic production of "multiple and competing configurations of possibility within the world of the poem," see Colleen Ruth Rosenfeld, *Indecorous Thinking: Figures of Speech in Early Modern Poetics* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2018), 97–119, quotation from 119.

[73] On how these final similes depict the cause of the expulsion from Eden ambiguously, see Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution,* 172–76.