The Disenchantanted World of

Paradise Regained

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ABSTRACT Satan and his fellow fallen angels masquerade in Paradise Regained as "Demonian spirits" (2.122), as if they were divinities abstracted out of Nature and its World-Soul rather than the creatures of God. They literally masquerade as such nature-spirits in the two episodes of the brief epic most closely associated with romance, as benign woodland nymphs coming to minister to Milton's Jesus in the banquet temptation of book 2, and as scary storm-demons who menace him in the tempest of book 4. Jesus sees through and puts an end to their revels, exorcising from the human mind the belief in the very existence of such nature-daemons, the basis of Renaissance magical thinking. Paradise Regained disenchantds the natural world and reflects the shift of Renaissance thought itself toward the objectivity of science, at the possible cost to poetry and romance. Keywords: early modern belief in nature spirits; Renaissance occult philosophy; Henry Cornelius Agrippa; divinity and landscape; Milton's On the Morning of Christ's Nativity

IN HIS CLASSIC ESSAY on Paradise Regained, Northrop Frye writes of the poem's ending, when Jesus stands atop the Jerusalem Temple:

Judaism joins Classical wisdom as part of the demonic illusion, as the centre of religion passed from the temple Christ is standing on into the Christian temple, the body of Christ above it. The destruction of the Garden of Eden at the flood showed that God "attributes to place no sanctity," and the later destruction of the temple, prefigured at this point, illustrates the same principle. Christ's casting of the devils out of heaven prefigured the cleansing of the temple, with which, according to John, his ministry began. Here, with the end of the temptation, Christ has chased the devil out of the temple of his own body and mind and is ready to repeat the process for each human soul.1

The casting out of devils is a central action of *Paradise Regained*. Just before its final verses, the angelic choir, as if summing up the poem as well as the ministry of Jesus that is to come, predicts his curing of the demoniac and sending the legions who tormented him into the Gadarene swine (4.626–32; see Matt. 8:28–32; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39). The exorcism performed on the human individual corresponds in *Paradise Regained* to the deconsecration not only of the Jerusalem Temple, but also of the pagan oracles, emptied of their resident deities/demons. The cessation of the oracles is an old Miltonic story: it begins the last third of Milton’s first great poem, *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity* (1629), which recounts the dawn of true religion and the dispelling of the night of pagan error. “The oracles are dumb” (173), it proclaims, and tells how “Apollo from his shrine / Can no more divine / With hollow shriek the steep of Delphi leaving” (176–78).2 Similarly the first book of *Paradise Regained* concludes with Jesus breaking the good news to Satan: “henceforth oracles are ceased, / And thou no more with pomp and sacrifice / Shalt be inquired at Delphos or elsewhere, / At least in vain, for they shall find thee mute” (*PR* 1.456–59). The silencing of Delphi anticipates the supersession of the Temple at the poem’s end. Jesus declares himself God’s “living oracle,” and the motion of the Spirit within his future worshippers the “inward oracle” (1.460, 463). Satan reprises the idea at the beginning of book 3, when he compares the wisdom of Jesus to the “oracle / Urim and Thummon” of Aaron’s breastplate (3.14–15) and of an Old Testament priesthood now itself superseded.3

*Paradise Regained*, I want to argue by way of an expansion of Frye’s account, extends the exorcism of unclean spirits from the oracular temple to expel them from the world of nature itself, the world that Satan falsely claims to possess as his dominion. More starkly than *Paradise Lost*, the sequel epic places itself in a line of Renaissance thought, rationalist and Protestant, that destroyed an older cosmos of inborn spiritual forces and magical sympathies. The removal of the demonic from nature—more properly, the removal of the idea of nature spirits from the habits of human thought—predominates and accounts for Milton’s two striking additions to the gospel narrative: the banquet temptation in book 2 and the storm scene of book 4. These are, not coincidentally, the two episodes mostly closely associated with romance, the medieval

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3. *Paradise Lost* had been framed at either end by the same myth. Book 1 foretells how the demons it catalogues as they rise off the burning lake of hell will originally be enshrined as pagan deities, the same deities banished in the Nativity Ode; see Jason Rosenblatt, “Audacious Neighborhood”: Idolatry in *Paradise Lost*, Book I.” *Philological Quarterly* 54 (1975): 553–68, for Eden and the Jerusalem Temple, 563–64. The principal Near Eastern gods/devils will inhabit cult sites adjacent to or even inside the Jerusalem Temple (*PL* 1.376–506); others will inhabit the Greek oracles of Delphi, the “Delphian cliff,” and Dodona (*PL* 1.517–18). At the beginning of book 11 Eden is associated with the oracle of Themis (11.10–14), which stood at Delphi. Euripides recounts in the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* how Apollo took the oracle over, expelling the nocturnal spirits of Themis. This was among Milton’s poetic models in the Nativity Ode for the expulsion of Apollo himself from his oracle, the first in the poem’s long line of deposed pagan deities; see David Quint, “Expectation and Prematurity in Milton’s *Nativity Ode*,” *Modern Philology* 97 (1999): 195–219. For the tradition, see C. A. Patrides, “The Cessation of the Oracles: The History of a Legend,” *Modern Language Review* 60 (1965): 500–507.
and Renaissance genre that depends, as James Nohrnberg has argued in the case of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, on an idea of polydaemonism and "the science of magic." Milton's early poetry had alternately unmasked and reveled in the magical world of romance. By the time and by the end of *Paradise Regained*, the magic has gone.

In both the banquet and storm episodes, Satan identifies his fellow devils with the elemental demons of Neoplatonic and Renaissance occult philosophy—that is, as spirits, so many parts of the World-Soul, that dwell within and animate nature, or that emanate as abstractions from nature, in particular from the planets and stars, and from the four elements of fire, air, water, and earth. As Henry Cornelius Agrippa explains, in what is one of the clearest and most succinct expositions of the doctrine of demons in book 3, chapter 16 of his *De occulta philosophia* (1531), the demons of the elements are also classified in subgroups by their relationship to the stars and planets, for example as Jovial or Saturnine, and they are tied to the landscape from which "derive Silvanuses, Fauns, Satyrs, Pans, Nymphs, Naiads, Nereids, Dryads." In chapter 17, Agrippa seeks to assimilate these demons with the angels divided into their hierarchies by the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and he notes that the lowest of these angels are ready "to infuse forces and virtues into the smallest herbs and pebbles and to constitute a species of mediators between human beings and divinity" (450–51 [3.17]): they are the basis for a spiritual or white magic.

But this is only one half of the story. Some theologians, Agrippa goes on to recount, postulate that co-existing with these demons there is a parallel group of subterranean, maleficent demons of at least equal number, also organized according to the stars and elements and four parts of the world. The first rank of these, Agrippa explains

4. "The magical landscape of romance is also animistic or daemonological in character: nymphs and fairies resort to its springs; geniuses guard its groves and fertile places; its trees shed a circle of malign or beneficent influence; its wells dispense crippling or healing virtues; its forests are haunted by sympathetic or offended beasts, and witches keep their fires there; its caves form the cells of legendary magicians or hermit-healers, the shrines of oracles, or the dwelling places of unpropitiated ogres; and its summits are visited by visions of spiritual creatures. In short, all the remarkable features of this landscape function as places where the spirits gather, or issue, or make themselves felt or known. The power of such places may be considered ultimately to derive from some deeper, undepartmentalized theogonic principle; this untapped nature, in which the seeds of things lie undisclosed, is the proper subject of the science of magic"; James Nohrnberg, *The Analogy of the Faerie Queene* (Princeton, N.J., 1976), 763–64. On the "daemonic agent" (768) in allegory, Nohrnberg cites Angus Fletcher, *Allegory* (Ithaca N.Y., 1964), 25–69. For a different, but related, discussion of *Paradise Regained* and romance, see Annabel Patterson, "Paradise Regained: A Last Chance at True Romance," *Milton Studies* 17 (1983): 187–208; Patterson sees Milton constructing the poem on "rigorously antiromantic lines," although she sees Milton trying to salvage or transform the Marvelous in the pinnacle temptation.

in chapter 18, is “that of the Pseudothei, that is, the false gods, so-called because they usurp the name of God and demand sacrifices and worship, like that demon who said to Christ, showing him all the kingdoms of the world, If you will worship me and prostrate yourself at my feet, I will concede to you all that you see” (452 [3.18])—that is, the Satan of the Bible and of Paradise Regained, who offers Jesus the kingdoms with the proviso that he “fall down, / And worship me as thy superior lord” (4.166–67). There follow, in the next rank down of Agrippa’s hierarchy, “the spirits of falsehood. . . . This species of demons infiltrate the oracles and delude humans with false predictions” (452–53 [3.18]); their prince was the Python who inspired the oracle at Delphi. Still others have “populated the shadowy air, the lakes, the rivers, the seas: some terrorizing the earth and terrestrial things and attacking those who dig wells and extract metals, causing cave-ins, making mountains rock back and forth, tormenting men and beasts . . . varying their appearances, they perturb men with made-up terror” (455 [3.18]). Natural demons thus have their mirroring counterpart in Satan and his fellow fallen angels, who pretend in Paradise Regained to possess and control the elements. The brief epic exposes this pretense as a sham. For what Agrippa does not say—because he wishes to preserve a realm of licit magic—is that Augustine, among the theologians he cites, denied the existence of the first, “good” kind of demons altogether. In books 8–10 of The City of God, Augustine condemns the doctrine of demons as human delusion and idolatry: no one but Christ can mediate between humans and God. Augustine dispenses of magic and of the notion

that by means of herbs, and stones, and animals, and certain incantations and noises, and drawings, sometimes fanciful, and sometimes copied from the motions of the heavenly bodies, men created upon earth powers capable of bringing about various results: all that is only the mystification which these demons practice on those who are subject to them, for the sake of furnishing themselves with merriment at the expense of their dupes.7

Augustine refused to identify these demons with good angels, and asserted that anyone thinking to communicate with a good demon of nature was in fact prey to a devil happy to disguise himself in the part.

Milton follows Augustine’s logic in Paradise Regained in order to empty the world of nature spirits: that is, to end human belief in their very being. Here, as in the case of the cessation of the oracles, he looks back to On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity, in which the verses that follow Apollo’s leaving Delphi describe a more universal abandonment:

6. The Satan of Paradise Lost is last seen in simile as this “Huge Python,” as he and the other fallen angels are transformed into serpents (PL 10.529–31).
No nightly trance, or breathed spell
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.
The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
   A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament;
From haunted spring, and dale
Edged with poplar pale,
   The parting genius is with sighing sent,
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

(179–88)

The nymphs, Agrippa says, are a way to talk about the spirit of the landscape, the genius loci. But the idea that nature is animated by spirits turns out to be one more human and pagan error, however elegiac the tone taken by the Ode in dispelling it. These spirits turn out to be devils who have rushed in to take the roles a sexualized imagination has created—lovely flowers suggest and become hard to distinguish from the lovely hair of nymphs (although the “tangled thickets” of the next verse revises the mental image)—and they can take even more charming shape as fairies “leaving their moon-loved maze” (237) in the penultimate stanza of the poem.8 But the devils have not in fact rushed into nature, but into the human mind.

Christian truth dispels such attempts to cast a human face upon nature, but the impulse is hard to give up. During the same years in which Milton wrote On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity, he tried on the melancholic persona of the Penseroso who aspires to learn from the pages of Plato or Hermes Trismegistus,

   of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet, or with element.

(Il Penseroso, 93–96)

With such knowledge of nature, broken down into its elementary demons with their planetary subcharacteristics, shared correspondences, and secret sympathies, the Penseroso will seek his hermitage and

The hairy gown and mossy cell
Where I may sit and rightly spell

Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.

(169–74)

The rhymes of “cell” and “spell” return here from the Nativity Ode, as do the ideas of magical control of nature—we recall Agrippa’s lesser demon/angels who infuse herbs with secret powers—and of oracular prediction, here through reading the stars. It is hard to know—and the chronology of these great early works of Milton is uncertain—which poem is correcting which: the Penseroso may aspire to only something “like” prophecy; he may “rightly” (lawfully as much as correctly) “spell” (investigate as much as conjure); his may be the good demons of white magic. But the Nativity Ode has already disenchanted nature and put an end to magic. In Paradise Regained “demons” are demonic: they are devils literally masquerading as demons.

As they gather for their second council in the middle region of the air in book 2, the Satan of Paradise Regained congratulates his fellow fallen angels for their possession of the elements:

Princes, heaven’s ancient sons, ethereal thrones,
Demonian spirits now, from the element
Each of his reign allotted, rightlier called,
Powers of fire, air, water, and earth beneath[.]

(2.121–24)

It is a tricky and crucial passage. With rhetorical sleight of hand, Satan suggests that the devils have only gotten back now what was theirs in the first place. The first of these verses echoes his speech in Paradise Lost in response to Abdiel’s contention that the angels were created by God, and created through the Son at that. To the contrary, Satan had argued that they were the products of nature: “the birth mature / Of this our native heaven, ethereal sons” (5.863–64). Like the classical gods of Hesiod’s Theogony listed in the catalogue of demons in book 1 of Paradise Lost, who boasted Heaven and Earth as their parents (1.508–10), the angels in this account—and God, too, Satan implies—emanated out of the skystuff of rarefied ether, or out of thin air. The Satan of Paradise Regained knows better.9 He begins the poem at the demonic council held “in mid air” (1.39) by addressing his followers as the “ancient powers of air”; “much more willingly I mention air / This our old conquest.” Yes, he is titled “Prince and power of the air” (Eph. 2:2), but the title comes by conquest, not by birth: he is neither native to the

element nor its true possessor; *Paradise Lost* had described it as “the air / The realm itself of Satan long usurped” (10.188–89). He and the devils are titled, but not entitled with property rights to nature. Satan equivocates in book 2 of *Paradise Regained* because he is also lying about the devils’ new identity as so-called Demonian spirits: they may inhabit God’s creation and claim to be called spirits of the four elements, but they are not, in fact, animating parts or distillments of nature. Such natural demons never existed in the first place—however much real, evil demons may want to play at being them in order to deceive human beings and to claim for themselves an autonomous ground of being, pretending to be independent of the deity who first made them and from whom they have fallen away.

The point is spelled out in the ensuing action of book 2 in the banquet temptation that Milton added to the gospels. Satan rebukes Belial for suggesting a sexual temptation, saying that the severely virtuous Jesus would be unmoved by a woman, even should she “As sitting queen adored on beauty’s throne / Descend with all her winning charms begirt / To enamour” (2.212–14). The image suggests a throned figure lowered at a masque, and it seems to cue Satan into action. He gathers a troupe of fellow spirit-actors “To be at hand, and at his beck appear, / If cause were to unfold some active scene / Of various persons each to know his part” (2.238–40). Satan puts on another version of the masque presented at Ludlow Castle in the ensuing banquet in a “woody scene” (2.294), where he appears in a guise that is pointedly “Not rustic as before” (2.299), but urbane and courtly. The final vanishing of the banqueting table (2.400f.) smacks of *The Tempest* (3.3.183). *The Tempest*’s banquet and its ensuing act 4 masque are put on by spirits who, like Ariel, are under the command of Prospero in his cell, and they, like Ariel at the end of the play, are released to their “elements” (5.1.318), melting into thin air. They are so many nature spirits such as those Prospero invokes: “Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves” (5.1.33) and “demi-puppets that / By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make” (5.1.36–37)—the fairies of Milton’s moon-loved maze. *Comus* itself takes place under the guidance of an “aerial spirit” (3)—or “daemon” as he is called in the Trinity manuscript—and of Sabrina, the goddess of the Severn: but *that* is allegory, and Sabrina at least, like the “genius of the shore” that Lycidas will become, was a human being who has received “the crown that virtue gives / After this mortal change” (*A Masque*, 9–10). In the banquet temptation, Satan’s devils—like the actors in Shakespeare’s theater or of Milton’s masque—*play the parts* of nature spirits, and by doing so, they reveal both that they are not part of nature and that such spirits are unreal.

It is unclear whether the “woody scene” itself is part of the stage set or a particularly attractive natural *locus amoenus*:

Nature’s own work it seemed (Nature taught Art)
And to a superstitious eye the haunt
Of wood-gods and wood-nymphs;

(2.295–97)
The Spenserian “seemed” casts some doubt, but Nature may in fact surpass Art. “Fit haunt of gods,” Eve had described the Eden from which she was banished in *Paradise Lost* (11.271), giving a postlapsarian twist to Raphael’s earlier description of the earth itself, Edenic at its creation: “a seat where gods might dwell / Or wander with delight, and love to haunt / Her sacred shades” (7.329–31). Superstition began with the Fall, when Eve bowed down, “as to the power / That dwelt within” (9.835–36), the power she falsely imagined dwelt within the tree of the forbidden fruit: as if the woods were indeed haunted. God had, in fact, preemptively moved against such nature cults when he sent his angelic guard around Eden, “Lest Paradise a receptacle prove / To spirits foul, and all my trees their prey” (11.123–24).

The wood gods and nymphs suggest here in *Paradise Regained* the sexual power and force of the landscape. In this case, too, Milton recalls his early poetry. In his Latin *Elegy 5, On the Coming of Spring*, he invited the rustic deities—satyrs; the half-goat, half-god Sylvanus; Pan; Faunus; the Dryads and Oreads (119–30)—to remain, each divinity attached to its particular grove—“Et sua quisque sibi numina lucus habet. / Et sua quisque diu sibi numina lucus habeto” (132–33) and to prolong the English spring as they join in the cosmic lovemaking that the sun and earth have newly begun. He would expel the nymphs from their trees and mountains in the Nativity Ode written later in the same year; and they and the same trio of Pan, Sylvanus, and Faunus are pointedly excluded from the sacred marital bower of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* (4.705–8).10

The gods are those whom Satan in *Paradise Regained* rebukes Belial for having impersonated—“Apollo, Neptune, Jupiter, or Pan, / Satyr, or Faun, or Sylvan” (2.190–91; emphasis added)—in order to couple with the daughters of men. These beastly gods—Jupiter pursued Antiopa (2.187) as a satyr, Neptune rescued Amymone (2.188) from a satyr only to rape her himself—are not divinities of nature, but a single devil of lewdness. We have seen the same list in Agrippa’s description of landscape spirits—“Silvanuses, Fauns, Satyrs, Pans, Nymphs, Naiads, Nereids, Dryads.” Satan’s actor-devils themselves play the role of the latter nature goddesses.

in order stood
Tall stripling youths rich-clad, of fairer hue
Than Ganymede or Hylas, distant more
Under the trees now tripped, now solemn stood
Nymphs of Diana’s train, and Naiades
With fruits and flowers from Amalthea’s horn,
And ladies of the Hesperides, that seemed
Fairer than feigned of old, or fabled since
Of faëry damsels met in forest wide
By knights of Logres, or of Lyonesse,
Lancelot or Pelleas, or Pellenore,

10. “In shady bower / More sacred and sequestered, though but feigned, / Pan or Silvanus never slept, nor nymph, / Nor Faunus haunted” (PL 4.705–8; emphasis added).
And all the while harmonious airs were heard
Or chiming strings, or charming pipes and winds
Of gentlest gale Arabian odours fanned
From their soft wings, and Flora’s earliest smells.

(2.351–65)

The pronounced alliteration and internal rhymes (“trees,” “Naiades,” “ladies,” “Hesperides”) of the verse already suggest the music it goes on to describe in the chiming, of “chiming” itself with “strings,” “charming,” and “wings.” “Fairer” than fairies: as at the end of the Nativity Ode, the classical nature deities who appeal to a superstitious eye have been identified with the even greater superstition of fairy lore and brought from Greece and Rome to Milton’s Britain. The proximity of the Naiades in verse 355 to the mention, along with Ganymede, in verse 353 of Hylas, whom the Naiades pulled under their waters, lends an air of sexual threat; both Hylas and Ganymede were male victims of rape, heterosexual and homosexual respectively. The fairy damsels may be similar succubae, less benign versions of Shakespeare’s Titania in love with Bottom.11 Satan follows Belial’s cue more than he lets on.

Nonetheless, according to Satan, these goddesses, like the personified Flora, too, all name the same thing.

All these are spirits of air, and woods, and springs,
Thy gentle ministers, who come to pay
Thee homage, and acknowledge thee their Lord[.]

(2.374–76)

When Jesus refuses to sit and eat at this table, he also refuses the charade that nature is inhabited by divinity. The scene suggests a satanic rewrite of book 1, canto 6 of the Faerie Queene, where the “woody Nymphes, faire Hamadryades” and “light-foot Naiades” (18), together with “Faunes and Satyres” and “old Sylvanus” (7), do indeed flock to the Word of God personified by Una.12 But Jesus’s rebuke causes these nymphs

11. For Hylas and the nymphs, see Theocritus 13; Statius identifies the nymph as a Naiad (Sylvae 3.4.42–45). Robert Burton writes in The Anatomy of Melancholy: “Water-devils are those naiads or water-nymphs which have been heretofore conversant about waters and rivers. The water (as Paracelsus thinks) is their chaos, wherein they live; some call them fairies, and say that Habundia is their queen; these cause inundations, many times shipwrecks, and deceive men divers ways, as succubae, or otherwise, appearing most part (saith Trithemius) in women’s shapes”; Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy (1932; reprint, New York, 1977), 192 (1.2.2.1). For the fairy succuba, see Matthew Woodcock, Fairy in the Faerie Queene: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Myth (London, 2004), 105–6. See also Maggi, In the Company of Demons, 145–60. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, Milton’s Brief Epic (Providence, R.I., 1966), 224–25, discusses the references to the knights in Malory’s Morte D’Arthur. The tall stripling youths compared to Ganymede and Hylas are possible enticements for Jesus; see Claude J. Summers, “The (Homo)sexual Temptation in Milton’s Paradise Regained,” Journal of Homosexuality 3 (1997): 45–69.

of Diana to vanish—as she and they do from Ireland in Spenser’s valedictory Mutabilitie Cantos, along with the goddess Nature herself. Belief in such nature spirits may be the greater temptation than the sensual pleasures of the banquet, for it amounts to the worship of a divine presence in nature rather than of an external creator—or the worship of an idol that the carnal mind has shaped from nature: a beautiful landscape as a beautiful nymph. Jesus replies to Satan that he, too, can command a table in the wilderness by “swift flights of angels ministrant” (2.383–85); but when angels do bring him such a table at the end of the poem, the food they proffer is celestial and not of this world (4.588). The wilderness remains a wilderness.

When Jesus subsequently turns down the offer of the kingdoms of the world made by Satan, Agrippa’s example of a Pseudotheus, in book 4, he rejects Satan’s claim to possess them: “by thee usurped, / Other donation none thou canst produce” (4.183–84). Like the papal claim to temporal rulership advanced in the counterfeited Donation of Constantine, Satan’s dominion over the kingdoms is as much of a fiction as his rule over the air. Satan counters that he receives his title from men and angels—only proving Jesus’s point—and he renews his title to possess the elements.

What both from men and angels I receive,
Tetrarchs of fire, air, flood, and on the earth
Nations besides from all the quartered winds,
God of this world invoked and world beneath[.]

(4.200–203)

Men are the nations of the earth; angels here are the supposed demons of the elements, to which Satan pointedly adds the winds. Following the same pattern we have just seen in book 2, Satan first makes the claim that he and his fellow devils inhabit and rule elemental nature, and later in the book offers a demonstration. In the case of book 4, it will be the storm scene, in which the winds, no longer of “gentlest gale,” will rush “abroad / From the four hinges of the world” (4.414–15), revealing the pun on “quartered” at verse 202 that already corresponds to the “Tetrarchs” of the four elements. Satan aims to show that he is indeed prince and power of the air.

Just as in the case of the woody scene of the banquet temptation, however, Milton deliberately leaves ambiguous whether the storm is Satan’s creation or a natural

13. Gone here, to a great extent, is the elegiac tone of the Mutabilitie Cantos and the Nativity Ode, the sense that with the departing nature gods goes the visionary world of poetry itself, as the mind of the human subject recognizes its non-correspondence to the natural object. Hartman, “False Themes,” in Beyond Formalism, 289, writes: “If Romance is an eternal rather than archaic portion of the human mind, and poetry its purification, then every poem will be an act of resistance, a negative creation—a flight from one enchantment to another.” On this aspect of the Mutabilitie Cantos, see Nohrnberg, The Analogy of the Faerie Queene, 757–91 at 765 (for the comparison to Milton); Nohrnberg suggests the masque dimensions of the Mutabilitie Cantos in “Supplementing Spenser’s Supplement, a Masque in Several Scenes: Eight Literary-Critical Meditations on a Renaissance Numen called Mutabilitie,” in Celebrating Mutabilitie, ed. Jane Grogan (Manchester, 2010), 85–135. See also the essay of Gordon Teskey, “Night Thoughts on Mutabilitie,” in Celebrating Mutabilitie, 24–39 at 34–36 (on landscape and nymphs).
phenomenon. Critics have generally assumed that Satan sends the storm.\textsuperscript{14} He cer-
tainly sends “ugly dreams” (405), and then he adds to the terror of the storm itself, as
the narrator comments in an apostrophe to Jesus:

\begin{quote}
nor yet stayed the terrors there,
Infernal ghosts, and hellish furies, round
Environed thee, some howled, some yelled, some shrieked,
Some bent at thee their fiery darts, while thou
Sat’st unappalled in calm and sinless peace.
\end{quote}

(4.421–25)

The devils again are playing parts—though this instance is something closer to type-
casting and to their real experience of hell—as ghosts and furies. They further imitate
the howling and shrieking winds, and the flashes of lightning, darts of fire, of the storm
itself: it is as if they were storm-demons, personifications of this threatening nature,
just as the nymphs and naiads they played before embodied a beneficent nature.\textsuperscript{15}
When the fair morning comes, it

\begin{quote}
stilled the roar
Of thunder, chased the clouds, and laid the winds,
And grisly spectres, which the Fiend had raised
To tempt the Son of God with terrors dire.
\end{quote}

(4.428–31)

It is unclear whether the relative “which” of verse 430 refers back to the roar, clouds,
and winds, or only to the immediately preceding specters that clearly \textit{are} Satan’s work.
After the storm, Satan claims to have heard its rack, “but myself / Was distant”
(4.453–54). He is lying as usual, but there may be a half-truth in what he says:\textsuperscript{16} he may
be prince of the air and still not have control over the weather.\textsuperscript{17} “Thou storm’st
refused” (4.496), Jesus says to him, summing up the episode, but even here, the lan-
guage is carefully ambiguous. Storms are normally sent in classical epic by an angry

\textsuperscript{14}. In her discussion of the storm scene, Lewalski notes precedents for the storm in the story of
Job; see Lewalski, Milton’s Brief Epic, 301–21, esp. 307–9.
\textsuperscript{15}. Arnold Stein, in Heroic Knowledge (Hamden, Conn., 1965), observes of the storm scene: “In a
way this is the banquet reversed: not a solicitous nature offering its beautiful all to its lord (and vanish-
ing abruptly with the brief horror of the sound of harpies’ wings and talons), but an angry nature
threatening with an excess of horror for the sake of excess” (119).
\textsuperscript{16}. Jesus characterizes Satan as oracle thus: “mixing somewhat true to vent more lies” (1.433).
\textsuperscript{17}. Merritt Y. Hughes, in his commentary on Paradise Regained in John Milton: Complete Poems
and Major Prose (New York, 1957), 525, assumes that Satan does send the storm, but he cites the con-
tradictory evidence: “It suits Milton’s purpose to disregard Reginald Scot’s denial in The Discoverie of
Witchcraft that Satan has any power over the weather, the lightning or thunder, and to assume with
Burton (Anatomy, 191 [1.2.1.2]) that ‘Aerial spirits . . . cause many tempests, thunder, and lightnings,
tear oaks, fire steeples, houses’” (525).
deity, but in this reformed Christian poem a storm may just be a storm. The effect of the ambiguity is at the least to distinguish the physical storm from Satan’s added special effects, and Jesus will make this distinction himself. Satan contends that the storm is prophetic of future adversities that await Jesus if he does not act now according to the timetable Satan offers him, “So many terrors, voices, prodigies / May warn thee, as a sure foregoing sign” (4.482–83). The supplemental work of the diabolic agents—a storm does not have a literal voice and is not in itself prodigious—has made the tempest appear to be directed at Jesus. It is these pseudo-storm demons, instead of the storm itself, that Jesus rejects.

Me worse than wet thou find’st not; other harm
Those terrors which thou speak’st of, did me none;
I never feared they could, though noising loud
And threat’ning nigh: what they can do as signs
Betokening, or ill-boding, I contemn
As false portents, not sent from God, but thee[.] (4.486–91)

Jesus acknowledges the natural storm—he has gotten drenched—but not any metaphysical content in its violence. He has seen through the howling ghosts and dart-wielding furies for the satanic impostures they are. It was perhaps easier to detect the imagination’s masquerade of false worldly pleasures at the banquet temptation—Jesus was only hungry then—than to separate imagined fears from physical ones beneath a storm. The difference may account for the greater, indeed obvious staginess of the banquet scene. Or Milton, in constructing these parallel scenes, only needed to emphasize the staginess the first time, leaving it to the reader and to Jesus to apply its lesson to the storm.

Portents are another kind of false prophecy like oracles. Milton unifies the fiction of *Paradise Regained* by linking, as he had in the Nativity Ode, the driving of “deities” out of the oracles with a similar emptying out of elemental spirits from nature. Neither of these presences are real, but rather human illusions that Satan and his fellow devils have furthered by acting them out. But their revels now are ended. At the close of the poem in the pinnacle scene, Satan falls out of his pretended dominion of the air—in simile, he is like Antaeus, “Throttled at length in the air” (4.568)—while Jesus is upborn by angels through an air that is now “blithe” (4.585) because cleansed of the demon who had occupied it and indulged in the fantasy of conquest and ownership. In retrospect the storm has been another such cleansing of the temple of nature, leaving “all things [...] more fresh and green” (4.435). The title of *Paradise Regained* suggests

an epic reconquest of usurped territory, which turns out to be both the entire natural world and the inner world of the human mind. We are cleansed by a new consciousness that nature has never been the home or possession of demons—of any kind. Behind this exorcism built into Milton's plot of the redemption can be felt the immense shift in human thought between individual and cosmos, subject and object, which Renaissance culture struggled to bring about, the separation, as Eugenio Garin has put it, of the book of nature from the book of God.\(^\text{20}\) We may want to interpret this shift in Milton's own characteristic terms of liberty. The separation from nature of God and man makes both of the latter autonomous agents. Like Giovanni Pico's demolition of astral determinism, the end of belief in the influence of nature spirits emancipates the will and marks an advance for human freedom.\(^\text{21}\)

Still, this disenchantment comes at a price. In a similar storm on the heath, King Lear learns that winds do not crack anthropomorphic cheeks, and have no care, one way or the other, for human beings. Once we stop imagining a nature filled with its own animating divinity, \textit{Paradise Regained} argues, we give demons no purchase to deceive us and we send them packing, too. But then we are alone in a cosmos in which we find no kindred spirits—and its indifference may be more terrifying than the terrors that Satan directs at Jesus. The stage is now clear for true religion, but the over-compensation of the celestial communion table the angels offer at the end of the poem may be too much too late. The romance of the world is over, true science taking the place of "the science of magic." The romantics will try to find romance again, and to renew relationships of human knowledge and feeling with nature. Goethe's Faust, in love with Gretchen, gives thanks in the woods to the Erdgeist (World-Soul?) who has taught him to know "my brothers / In the silent bush, in the air and water."\(^\text{22}\) In the very next verses he admits that when storms rage and those very trees knock down their neighboring trees and neighboring branches, he beats a retreat into a cave to indulge in his own subjectivity (3228–34): so much for a fraternity between man and nature or within nature itself. But Faust's bigger problem is Mephisto, the spirit of


negation or romantic irony who externalizes and can be identified as Faust’s own self-consciousness, and who impolitely reduces Faust’s reveries to onanism, breaking their spell (3291–92). Where Milton’s Satan sought to foster illusions of a sympathetic relation between human beings and elemental nature, the post-enlightenment devil works in just the opposite direction, to disperse them. He is the spoilsport spirit of a disenchanted world.