NO OBSERVER OF the Renaissance need be told that literary criticism in recent years has removed its focal interest from John Donne and the Metaphysical poets to John Milton. The movement is discernible even amidst an increasing deluge of critical studies and reprints flooding into every channel of interest. As readings of the great Puritan proliferate, we have already received a history of the Metaphysical revival which, like all histories, is something of an epitaph.¹

One observes further that this shift has been closely paralleled by another: I speak of the truism that almost without our noticing, the once flourishing *explication de textes* has become largely a classroom exercise, having resigned the public stage of print except for occasional dazzling performances in historical garb.²


² This fact is mirrored in the gradual retirement from the critical scene of the "New Critics," those men whose names became most closely associated
THE METAPHORIC STRUCTURE OF PARADISE LOST

Despite earlier hints, such as Eliot's tercentenary warning that Donne's poetry might be "a concern of the present and the recent past, rather than of the future," the effective end of the Metaphysicals' domination of taste can be demarcated, more sharply than is usual in such matters, at the publication of Louis L. Martz' *Poetry of Meditation* in 1954. Since then there has appeared no new book of criticism concerned exclusively either with Donne or with the Metaphysical group. Rather, effort has been directed toward making those critical distinctions which would separate such contemporaries as George Herbert or Henry


Vaughan from the master. On the other hand, until 1953 there had been no books on Milton employing the methods of detailed analysis which have become the hallmark of twentieth-century criticism, if we except the rather ephemeral series by E. M. W. Tillyard and that by B. Rajan.

However, within a few months of Martz’ study, Arnold Stein, Don Cameron Allen and W. B. C. Watkins each issued perceptive book-length examinations of Milton as poet. They were quickly followed by the iconoclastic but often creative endeavor of Robert Martin Adams in 1955; by the handsomely documented readings of Howard Schultz and Kester Svendsen in that and the following year; by Stein’s elaborate analysis of the later poems in a 1957 volume which appeared almost simultaneously with Rosemond Tuve’s essay into the imagery of earlier pieces; and most recently by Isabel MacCaffrey’s important Paradise Lost as “Myth,” as well as by the thematically less coherent, more impressionistic readings of Paradise Lost by J. B. Broadbent and by John Peter.

Tillyard’s studies made only occasional critical flourishes, and are best classified as extensions of Raleigh’s Milton overlaid with unintentional parodies of Freudian biography: see Milton (London, 1930), The Miltonic Setting (London, 1938), and Studies in Milton (London, 1951). To these was belatedly added a pamphlet on dead issues: The Metaphysicals and Milton (London, 1956). C. S. Lewis’ A Preface to Paradise Lost (London, 1942) and A. J. A. Waldock’s Paradise Lost and its Critics (Cambridge, 1947) both made a controversial impact, but are much the same impressionistic and psychologizing apologetics as that which characterizes Tillyard’s books. Better in some sections than either was B. Rajan’s Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader (London, 1947), but the value of its remarks is dissipated by their being scattered in vast deserts of historical rehash or vague stylistic impressions.

It is not my intention in the following discussion to detract from the considerable and permanent values which modern critics have indubitably established as a part of our heritage from Donne and those poets regarded as his most sympathetic contemporaries. Rather, it is my gesture of faith to believe that poems choose their own critics. To extrapolate this thesis will lead me into speculation upon the meaning of the declined interest in Donne, a poet so accessible to the "explicator," and into association of the recent heightening of Milton's reputation with the rise of a critical mode which I rather reluctantly label "metaphoric."  

It will be seen in the course of what follows that, from one point of view, this descriptive term has been forced upon me by the usage of many of those practicing critics and aestheticians whose views and methods I set in contradistinction to the ways of the New Criticism. And it will be clear that I use the term as they use it, with an eye to the function rather than to the nature of metaphor: especially at those moments when tenor

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*The following essay implies my disagreement with recent attempts to explain the direction of contemporary criticism: see Roy Harvey Pearce, "Historicism Once More," *KR*, XX (1958), 554-91; Hyatt Waggoner, "The Current Revolt Against the New Criticism," *Criticism*, I (1959), 211-25; Duncan, *Revival of Metaphysical Poetry*, pp. 174-81. The most valuable examination of the modern main stream and its heritage I find in Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (New York, 1957). Kermode superbly analyzes the fulcrum of that critical seesaw which made Donne rise at Milton's expense under the pressure of a false history written in defense of a valuable Symbolist aesthetic. While he does not attempt to predict the "new categories and still unheard persuasions" which will dominate future criticism, Kermode's closing words might serve as epigraph for the shifting interest which I hope to explain: "The time cannot be far off when [*Paradise Lost*] will be read once more as the most perfect achievement of English poetry, perhaps the richest and most intricately beautiful poem in the world. . . . If poets turn back to Milton they will . . . discover, if I may use the lines eulogistically, 'mere' now meaning 'pure,' that 'He has found, after the manner of his kind, / Mere images'" (pp. 165-6).
and vehicle draw so closely together that language becomes an immediate structural clarification, rather than a signatory betrayal, of experience.

In the course of examining Heraclitus' place in the development of pre-Socratic philosophy, Philip Wheelwright has emphasized that just this inextricable drawing together of the two poles of a depth metaphor (as opposed to a grammatically telescoped and, hence, reversible simile) constituted Heraclitus' instrument for surpassing the monistic tendencies of the earlier naturalist and transcendentalist systems simultaneously, by uniting their truths: "the fire of which he speaks is neither strictly physical nor strictly metaphysical; it is physical and metaphysical together; for it is the feeding flame, perceptible both to outward sight and as inward exuberance, and at the same time it is the universal fact of perpetual change." In the course of his analysis, Wheelwright observes that this metaphoric language in the fragments is precisely that element which earned for Heraclitus his sobriquet, The Dark One. Because the radical acceptance of metaphor involves one in "the ontological status of paradox—an acceptance, that is to say, of the view that paradox lies inextricably at the very heart of reality." In brief, metaphor which cannot be expanded into simile cannot be "unsaid," because, "by literal standards [it] says too much. We declare, 'Fire is divine,' or we turn the sentence around and declare, 'God is fire.' And the result, in either direction—if the implications of the transcendental term are not ignored or caricatured—is flagrantly paradoxical." And radical paradox quite as clearly must be read with a mind aware of the metaphorical connotations encompassing its terms, if it is not to

8 Ibid., p. 92.
9 Ibid., p. 97.
be read as sheer nonsense. Heraclitus' "the way up and the way down are one and the same"; Keats' "vast shade in midst of his own brightness"; and Milton's "darkness visible" do not convey meaning without the double awareness engendered by metaphor.

It will become clear as my analysis develops that I also choose the term "metaphoric" because I believe that Paradise Lost can best be understood as a poem in which certain repeated metaphors mimetically express the epic theme with an unprecedented tenacity. And I hope that my argument will be convincing evidence for assertions concerning the radical interdependence of metaphor and paradox. For I will attempt to demonstrate how Milton, through this peculiarly structural development of metaphors, resolved the dilemma of reconciling the paradoxical modes of Christian expression for individual religious experience with interpersonal communication. Before attempting the demonstration, however, I will turn to a survey of some of those historical pressures which were both intensifying the dilemma and promoting its solution in the seventeenth century — to the immediate background of what I consider to be the primary organization of Paradise Lost.

This wedding of Miltonic and modern aesthetic fulcrums is not casual. Let me make explicit at the outset what I suppose is implied throughout the following pages: I view these immediate pressures which shaped Milton's way of creating a poem as also the ultimate background against which we may understand contemporary critical categories, the seed ground of our own aesthetic focus. And to clarify this significant sense in which we may speak of Milton's "modernity," I must begin by examining the phenomenon itself, that "metaphoric" organization of experience which is now most characteristic of criticism. Put most simply, my argument is that (if I have properly described the common denominator) this school of criticism is historically
determined as an instrument appropriate for revealing the values of Milton’s poem.

It is a safe enough commonplace, I think, that the New Criticism, in spite of its later attempts to isolate a poetic object, had its roots in psychology. To verify the remark, we need only look in the direction of I. A. Richards’ early studies of the aesthetic process, T. E. Hulme’s ambivalent fascination with Bergson, or the centrality of the genre of lyric in the explicatory canon. This psychological orientation was, of course, only one mirroring of the temporal face of modern philosophy. As early as 1927 Wyndham Lewis was already quixotically tilting at an impressive list of the makers of modern thought who suffer from “an intense preoccupation with time or ‘duration’ (the

10 Hulme is a classic case of a critic whose career was cut short in mid-motion from psychology toward the spatialization I later discuss. In the notes toward modern art he utilizes Worringer, the stimulus for Frank’s thinking about the novel (see below, page 15); and in the notes for Cinders he records: “The idealists analyse space into a mode of arranging sensations. But this gives us an unimaginable world existing all at a point. Why not try the reverse process and put all ideas (purely mental states) into terms of space. . . . The sense of reality is inevitably connected with that of space” (Speculations, ed. Herbert Read [New York and London, 1924], p. 240). On Hulme’s larger ambivalence toward the imagination, of which this statement is a corollary, see Murray Krieger, The New Apologists for Poetry (Minneapolis, 1956), pp. 31-45. The whole tenor of Krieger’s study is to reveal the New Critics’ attempts to incorporate Richards’ contextualism, while escaping the implications of his psychologistic orientation and the problems it raised both for the function and the objective status of the poem. But see particularly the discussions on pp. 114-22, 123-39, 183-8. In the course of their tortuous development, critics such as Brooks and Eliot (particularly in “Tradition and the Individual Talent”), showed tendencies toward the “metaphoric” approach to literature as my discussion defines it. It never, however, became a dominant element in either theory or practice within this roughly similar group of contextualists. Perhaps Hulme’s flirtation was the most serious manifestation. Cf. Kermode, Romantic Image, pp. 119-37, on Hulme’s dilemma and (pp. 140-61) the “dissociation of sensibility” dogma which emerged from it in New Critics, English and American.
psychological aspect of time, that is)." And Lewis was perceptive at least in sorting out Joyce from the shoal of epigoni who now appear only in the fine print in historical footnotes; the Irishman seemed to occupy the bad eminence at the peak of a pernicious tradition: "Without all the uniform pervasive growth of the time-philosophy starting from the little seed planted by Bergson, discredited, and now spreading more vigorously than ever, there would be no Ulysses, or there would be no A la Recherche du Temps perdu. There would be no 'time-composition' of Miss Stein; no fugues in words. In short, Mr. Joyce is very strictly of the school of Bergson-Einstein, Stein-Proust" (p. 89).

And the wide interest in psychological states as they are temporal processes was leading Joyce's admirer T. S. Eliot to Metaphysical poetry. In Eliot's classic phrases, Donne or Marvell have "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought . . . . they . . . feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose." But this apprehension is nonetheless developed temporally within that objective correlative which is the poem, since the parts of a Metaphysical lyric have, to again cite Eliot, "something like a syllogistic relation to each other," "a development by rapid association of thought which requires considerable agility on the part of the reader." The analysis of poem as process became standard practice. Allen Tate found that "the development of imagery by logical extension, the reasonable framework being an Ariadne's thread that the poet will not permit us to lose, is the hallmark of the poetry called metaphysical." Doniphan

11 Time and Western Man (1927; Boston, 1957), p. 111.
12 My quotations are, respectively, from the reprints in T. S. Eliot, Selected Essays: 1917-1932 (New York, 1932), pp. 246-7, 254, 242. Duncan, Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, pp. 144-9, however, traces Eliot's cycle through the enthusiasm of the twenties, to certain reservations about the Metaphysicals (in deference to Dante) in the thirties, and ultimately to the partial revaluation of Milton in 1948.
Louthan concluded that "training in (or long acquaintance with) patristic methods of exegesis, inclined Donne towards dialectical style." And Joan Bennett describes the Metaphysical poem as moving from "the contemplation of a fact to a deduction . . . to a conclusion."

It will be noticed that all of these comments are concentrated upon the method of the poet, not upon the shape of the poem or the structure of its rationale. Indeed, only very recently has Cleanth Brooks’ widely-known reading of Donne been challenged as an inversion of ends and means. "It is one thing," suggests William Rooney in a comment that might apply to many Metaphysical readings, "to say that a poem is made of paradoxical meanings and quite another thing to conclude that the poem functions to convey a paradox." But it was quite natural to overemphasize method when discussing the Metaphysicals, because their poetry was composed under the influence of mechanical directions toward a process by which one might unite Eliot’s "sensuous apprehension" to "thought."

In the book which I have described as marking the close of the Metaphysical revival, Martz fulfilled his aim of modifying "the view of literary history which sees a 'Donne tradition' in English religious poetry, . . . [suggesting] instead a 'meditative tradition.'" Turning to the multitude of meditational handbooks of the Renaissance, wherein men were taught to unify memory, understanding, and will, the soul’s three powers, around a divine point for contemplation, Martz found the structural origin of the "dialectical," "logical," and yet strangely personal

15 Four Metaphysical Poets (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 7-8. Cf. the critics cited in Duncan, Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, pp. 18-9, 123.
poetry of the Metaphysical favorites. Having detailed the elaborate steps in Ignatius Loyola’s “application of the senses,” Martz concludes: “It staggers the mind to ponder the effect that such a complex sequence would have upon a poet... It should produce a hitherto unparalleled integration of feeling and thought.”

Now, the “sensuous” element derived from the initial step in Ignatian meditational procedures is that vivification of the memory called “composition of place.” “We must see the place where the things we meditate on were wrought, by imagining ourselves to be really present at those places; which we must endeavour to represent so lively, as though we saw them indeed, with our corporall eyes.” At first thought, this might seem to represent a conquest of time, a step outside that durational cage from which Wyndham Lewis urged escape. In one sense, this supposition is accurate. Viewed in its doctrinal rationale, “composition of place” can become a technique for internalizing incarnational theory. We are made to appropriate to our own circumstances of self-examination a sense of the eternal presence of Christ. It is out of the exploration of this union between the historical and the perpetual incarnation that Donne creates the superimposition of historical myth upon personal microcosm in

Spit in my face yee Jewes, and pierce my side,  
Buffet, and scoffe, scourge, and crucifie mee,  
For I have sinn’d, and sinn’d, and onely hee,  
Who could do no iniquitie, hath dyed:  
But by my death can not be satisfied  
My sinnes, which passe the Jewes impiety:  
They kill’d once an inglorious man, but I  
Crucifie him daily, being now glorified.

18 Ibid., p. 79.  
19 Richard Gibbons, quoted in Martz, p. 27.  
The same fusion is obtained in the “Nativity” sonnet for Magdalen Herbert in which we are confronted with a direct composition of place “in this stall” which is yet taken outside of history as the poet turns to query, “Seest thou, my Soule, with thy faiths eyes, how he / . . . doth lye,” and which returns to a fused time prophetic of Milton’s “Nativity Ode” when the poet instructs his soul: “Kisse him, and with him into Egypt goe, / With his kinde mother, who partakes thy woe.”

But the central force of the meditational tradition was not effective in directing poetry into this atemporal channel, a mode having natural affinities with the efforts of our own time to juxtapose myths — efforts which will be cited in the course of this discussion. Rather, one finds upon broader exploration that the conformity of poetic to meditational pattern appears less often and less successfully within a single divine poem than within the structure of developmentally linked series, such as Donne’s “La Corona,” Herbert’s Temple or Traherne’s poetic manuscripts. And in such cases, the sense of mystic union between the historic myth and its eternal presentness is dissipated, as the corporal act of the past becomes mere history, existing in the temporal associations of a memory which conjures up the scene as stimulus for the intellectual and affective commentary of the present. In short, despite its intentional origins, the act of meditation ultimately encourages a structure of processive rather than superimposed relationships.

This effect of the technique can be emphasized further by reviewing Donne’s achievement from a somewhat different vantage point. If we attend to the secular rather than to the divine poems, we discover that it is here that Donne consistently composes scenic frameworks represented “so lively, as though we saw them indeed, with our corporall eyes.” And not only do the

21 Ibid., p. 3.
secular poems develop internally with "something like a syllogistic relation," but repeatedly the sun plays a major part in the scenic structure as both evidence and measure of the desperate temporality of events. Indeed, if time has seemed for one great tradition only the shadow of eternity, Donne inverts the formula in order to consume the fountain in the stream: "The Sun itself, which makes times, as they pass, / Is elder by a year, now." It is just this dominantly processive, temporal orientation of Metaphysical-become-meditational poetry which accounts for its abandonment by a large part of the serious critical audience in favor of Milton, a point I hope to clarify in the following pages.

Significantly, in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce replied to Wyndham Lewis' strictures by parodying *Time and Western Man* as *Spice and Western Woman* because the *Wake* is a poem of which memory is the subject, but a great circle of infinite recurrences is the primarily spatial form. It was Joyce's manner of affirming what the mathematician, Hermann Minkowski, formulated as a postulate fifty years ago: "Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality." It may be observed in passing that the Lewisite view is still


25 Martz himself has failed to analyze the complex modern attitude toward temporal structures, and therefore in his own way perpetuates the association of Donne with modern poetry by way of meditational discipline: see pp. 321-30, and a more recent restatement in "Donne and the Meditative Tradition," *Thought*, XXXIV (1959), 269-78. In the later article he is most insistent upon the centrality of an "act of finding" (p. 277), a "process by which unity of mind is discovered" (p. 272). He is, however, prompted to write by an awareness that, in spite of his thesis, there has been a growing reaction against Donne's reputation in favor of, among others, Milton.

26 *Space and Time* as quoted in Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (3rd ed.; Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 14. Joyce's "spatial" structure has been discussed in many places. For a convenient cross section, see William Troy, "Notes on *Finnegans Wake"* (1939); Frank Budgen, "Joyce's Chapters of Going Forth by Day" (1941); Frederick J. Hoffman, "Infroyce" (1945);
vigorously, as evidenced by the very recent analysis in which Lawrence Durrell set his own Alexandrian tetralogy against Joyce’s technique:

Modern literature offers us no Unities, so I have turned to science and am trying to complete a four-decker novel whose form is based on the relativity proposition. . . .

The three first parts . . . are to be deployed spatially . . . and are not linked in a serial form. They interlap, interweave, in a purely spatial relation. Time is stayed. . . .

This is not Proustian or Joycean method—for they illustrate Bergsonian “Duration” in my opinion, not “Space-Time.”

Clearly, in developing an already venerable history, the concept of space-time has not lapsed into the casualness usually accorded a commonplace. Rather, its cultural and philosophical implications have continued to excite exploratory efforts from investigators of widely varying persuasions and viewpoints. The most extensive impact, of course, has come from the incalculably influential work of Ernst Cassirer, whose *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* constitutes the *Grundlage* for later popular studies in the vein of his own *Myth and Language* and Susanne Langer’s *Philosophy in a New Key.*


27 “Note” prefatory to *Balthazar* (New York, 1958); cf. *Mountolive* (New York, 1959), p. 285; *Clea* (New York, 1960), pp. 12-4, 135-6, 143. It will become apparent that I am not of Durrell’s opinion; Joyce’s structures are spatially more complex than Durrell’s internovel relations.

28 For our present purposes, two observations are worth making without pretending to trace the development of Cassirer’s thought. The first is that
For the student of aesthetic form, however, two studies have been of even more particular significance. The first of these is Sigfried Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture*, which appeared in 1941. Trained under Heinrich Wölflin, who was the pupil of Jakob Burckhardt, Giedion brought to bear upon modern culture the same synthesizing techniques which his teachers had applied to the Renaissance. His achievement was to document the shift from three-dimensional perspective, finally abandoned by the Cubists early in this century, toward a new conception of planes in both painting and architecture, a conception that adapted the plane to the context of its civilization:

Cubism breaks with . . . perspective. It views objects relatively: that is, from several points of view, no one of which has exclusive authority. And in so dissecting objects it sees them simultaneously from all sides. . . . It goes around and into its objects. Thus, to the three dimensions . . . which have held good . . . throughout so many centuries, there is added a fourth one—time. . . . The presentation of objects from several points of view introduces a new principle which is intimately bound up with modern life—simultaneity.29

The flow of time which has its literary reflection in the Aristotelian development of an action having beginning, middle, and end is here being frozen into the labyrinthine planes of a spatial block which, like the immense organization of Rockefeller

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29 *Space, Time and Architecture*, p. 432.
Center,\textsuperscript{30} can only be perceived by traveling both temporally and physically from point to point, but whose form has neither beginning, middle, end, nor center, and must be effectively conceived as a simultaneity of multiple views.

The other study in the aesthetics of space-time which I find highly significant is Joseph Frank's "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," first published in 1945.\textsuperscript{31} Frank, too, found inspiration in the history of the plastic arts, emphasizing that naturalistic depth perspective gives objects a "time-value because it connects them with the real world in which events occur." On the other hand, "when depth disappears and objects are presented in one plane, their simultaneous apprehension as part of a timeless unity is obviously made easier."\textsuperscript{32} An analogous substitution has been made in the work of Pound, Eliot or Joyce, who

all deal, in one way or another, with the clash of historical perspectives induced by the identification of contemporary figures and events with various historical prototypes. . . . By this juxtaposition of past and present . . . history becomes unhistorical. . . . The objective historical imagination, . . . is transformed by these writers into the mythical imagination for which historical time does not exist—the imagination that sees the actions and events of a particular time merely as the bodying forth of eternal prototypes. These prototypes are created by transmuting the time-world of history into the timeless world of myth. And it is this timeless world of myth, forming the common content of modern literature, which finds its appropriate aesthetic expression in spatial form, that is, "the reader is intended to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence."\textsuperscript{33}

Now, by the concept of "myth" I believe most modern com-

\textsuperscript{30} Cf. ibid., pp. 744-55.
\textsuperscript{32} Criticism, p. 391.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., pp. 392, 381.
mentators to understand man’s practice of becoming the symbol of his own spiritual experience through projection of inner states into certain recurring narrative and scenic images. So understood, myth functions as a species of extended metaphor. It is as a consequence of this relationship, I think, that we find “myth” occupying a central position in Northrop Frye’s Anatomy of Criticism, a book which already has received wide, if not uncritical, recognition as the twentieth century’s richest contribution to aesthetic theory. The critic’s Finnegans Wake, this study is a great circular organization of mutating categories which attempts to “place” all written phenomena in their familial relationships. In Frye’s work, we again recognize an aesthetic created for a space-time cosmos: “Recurrence,” observes Frye, “is usually spoken of as rhythm when it moves along in time, and as pattern when it is spread out in space. . . . The score of a symphony may be studied all at once, as a spread-out pattern: a painting may be studied as the track of an intricate dance of the eye. Works of literature also move in time like music and spread out in images like painting.” Further, the two modes of form are organic derivatives of Frye’s conception of the role of criticism. For he sees the ultimately highest modes of literature as being mythic, rather than mimetic, i.e., creative rather than imitative of nature. And the linguistic analogue is the metaphor, as opposed to the discursive “sigmatic . . . verbal replica of external phenomena”: “whatever is constructive in any verbal structure seems to me to be invariably some kind of metaphor or hypothetical identification . . . metaphors in their turn become the units of the myth or constructive principle of the argument.”

Therefore, he suggests that literature has functioned like mathematics in imposing mythic form upon the universe: “Mathematics is at first a form of understanding an objective

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world regarded as its content, but in the end it conceives of the content as being itself mathematical in form, and when a conception of a mathematical universe is reached, form and content become the same thing.”

But the pattern of literature has its total metaphor in the conception of nature it has created as its image. Hence, Frye’s organization of modes, phases, and genres is developed in circular scales bearing relation to the four “phases” of myth: comedy, romance, tragedy, and satire; these themselves are imaged in their relations to one another by metaphoric seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

I will not pretend to do more than suggest the logical skeleton of Frye’s rationale for a terminology which at first meeting appears apocalyptic. But the point, for our purposes, is that in his *Anatomy of Criticism* the conception that the metaphor is the creative monad of the linguistic process leads into an elaborate architecture of interrelated points on dialectical circles; and yet, the ground metaphor for the entire structure is temporal: the seasons. Metaphor projects itself into the flux which is nature, creates a sense of process from that flux, and then borrows this process image back, but now in the spatial form of the circle which corresponds to the temporal image of cyclical motion. Time-space in this instance becomes not an aesthetic insight but a system of aesthetics—yet the form of its expression is like that found by Frank in the modern mythologists: time is the subject matter which paradoxically ends as spatial pattern.

Less dramatically, another influential theoretician has suggested the space-time dimension in elaborating the term “verbal icon” to describe the literary object. William Wimsatt has developed a large share of his thinking in response to felt inadequacies of the rather militant Neo-Aristotelians at the University of Chicago, for whom the temporal line of plot has seemed primary as a feature not only of the narrative but of the lyric genre. And in responding, Wimsatt found it necessary, not so

36 Ibid., p. 352.
much to set the metaphoric against the mimetic, as to exhibit how the poetic object engulfs mimetic process in stable form. In a key statement, he insists that "there are no poems which are in some exclusively proper way 'mimetic' and which hence should not be permitted a symbolic reading; and conversely, all 'symbolic' poems, if they are real poems, are in some important sense 'mimetic' and dramatic. . . . I believe — in direct contradiction . . . of Chicago doctrine — that analogy and metaphor are not only in a broad sense the principle of all poetry but are also inevitable in practical criticism." 37

Giedion and Frank find time being spatialized in the creative artists around them; Frye and Wimsatt make this union the substructure of an aesthetic for moderns. Other scholar-critics are finding the same process at work in that most obviously temporal of verbal forms, the drama. G. Wilson Knight in 1930 thus prefaced his finest book with a challenge to orthodoxy:

To receive the . . . Shakespearian vision . . . One must be prepared to see the whole play in space as well as in time. It is natural . . . to pursue the steps of the tale in sequence, . . . regarding those essentials that Aristotle noted: the beginning, middle, and end. But by giving supreme attention to this temporal nature of drama we omit what, in Shakespeare, is at least of equivalent importance. A Shakespearian tragedy is set spatially as well as temporally in the mind. . . . there are throughout the play a set of correspondences which relate to each other independently of the time-sequence which is the story. 38

Knight's own practice opened the way for a deluge of Shakespearian imagery studies in the forties, the most extreme of

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which was Robert Heilman’s *This Great Stage*, an interpretation of *King Lear*. In Heilman’s statement of presuppositions, it is interesting to notice that not only the theory, but the language in which it is phrased, has been permeated by the conception of literature as a space-time solid in which we can connect disparate temporal points as if they were areas in a crystalline verbal cube: “a series of dramatic statements about one subject does constitute a bloc of meaning which is a structural part of the play. This bloc may be understood as one of the author’s metaphors. It is a metaphor just as a body of recurrent images, with its burden of implications, is a metaphor. The dramatist’s basic metaphor is his plot. . . . All the constituent metaphors must be related to the large metaphor which is the play itself.”

Maynard Mack, a less explicit critic, proceeds along the same lines in a recent essay titled “The World of Hamlet.” The mode by which Mack reveals the coherence of this world is simply to weave into associational patterns the radical metaphors of the dramatic dialogue until he has prepared a reading which halts the literal movement of plot action at the close of *Hamlet* by freezing it into the stasis of metaphor. “We know that Hamlet is ready for the final contest of mighty opposites. He accepts the world as it is, the world as a duel, in which, whether we know it or not, evil holds the poisoned rapier and the poisoned chalice waits; and in which, if we win at all, it costs no less than everything.” Verbal metaphors have transmuted plot into a metaphor for Hamlet’s state of mind, which itself is a metaphor for the human predicament.

I do not wish to leave the impression that I agree wholeheartedly with the particular views of any of these critics, nor

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do I mean to suggest that they are unique. Quite the reverse. I wish only to give some indication of how thoroughly the reaction against a temporal preoccupation has influenced both practical criticism and aesthetic theory. In its place there has arisen a more complex orientation which attempts to utilize the metaphor as the monadic component of the mind's formal marriage of time with space. I hope to have suggested why the New Critics' characteristically developmental technique of *explication de textes*, has come to seem anachronistic in the wake of a criticism no less dedicated to verbal analysis. And when the interest of critics shifted toward this new mode, it was inevitable that they should abandon as the focus of taste the "Metaphysical" poets who had exerted such a fascination for proponents of a critical technique that was, as were the poems, temporal in structure. Now I should like to ask how and why the contemporary critic reads Milton.

While I elect to examine the work of only three among the readers of Milton catalogued earlier, it is to be understood that the others, with varying degrees of eclecticism and perception, have made similar approaches to the poems, although without such urgent and articulate commitment to a method.

Probably Francis Fergusson was moved in reaction to the literalism of the Chicago School to reinterpret Aristotle, so that the Greek's idea of "action" becomes the center for an "Idea of a Theater,"41 And "action" (*praxis*), writes Fergusson, "does not

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41 Paradoxically, while drama studies (Fergusson, Heilman, Mack, Knight, Bethell, Traversi) have been developing in a direction which moves away from the traditional conception of plot-as-imitation based upon the reading of Aristotle as a naturalistic critic, nondramatic studies, at the same time, have often been introducing dramatic development as a basic criterion of literary structures. I illustrate this in respect of Milton in my examination of Arnold Stein's readings below; one finds similar tendencies in the treatment of *Paradise Regained* in Don Cameron Allen, *The Harmonious Vision*, pp. 112, 118, 120, *et passim*.

Such an unexpected development seems to me to result from the rise of Chicago Neo-Aristotelianism, that movement in which the new academic criticism found an important stimulus after R. S. Crane's notable conversion.
mean outward deeds or events, but something much more like 'purpose' or 'aim'. . . . the plot of a play is the arrangement of outward deeds or incidents, and the dramatist uses it, as Aristotle tells us, as the first means of imitating the action."  

Arnold Stein, borrowing the phrase "drama of [the] mind" from Fergusson, has also imported his theory of "action" (which is another transmutation of "plot" into a metaphor for "end") for a reading of Milton's three major poems.

It is not surprising that a critic who served his apprenticeship as a reader of Donne should be inclined to hear the developing dialectic of drama in twin epics. But it is revelatory of the temper of recent years that he should attempt to utilize this drama as an instrument for establishing the presence of "myth." Toward the close of his book on Paradise Lost, Stein asserts that "Definition is determined by dramatic trial; rising toward God can be expressed only by myth, but false myth can be distinguished from true only by dramatic definition." The "drama," then, is the limited voice of each character, expressing in ideational and active terms his limited understanding of "this great argument"; the "myth" is the poem which expresses the argument: "[Paradise Lost] has the form of drama. . . .

Those who have taken their cues from the Chicagoans appear not to have grasped the implications of what the dramatic critics have sensed and what Father Ong (see below) has documented: that Aristotle formulated a poetic for an aural rather than a visual age of communication, and that to force the limitations of the former upon the literature of the latter is to sacrifice the modern potentiality for simultaneity of perception. See Krieger, New Apologists for Poetry, pp. 95-6, 150-4, 195-6, for a pertinent analysis of the Chicagoans' quarrel with critics other than Wimsatt.


43 Heroic Knowledge (Minneapolis, 1957), p. 96. Cf. the insistence upon the "dramatic" structure of Paradise Lost in Answerable Style, pp. 4, 14-5, 46, 50, 58-9, 93, 95, 116-8, 123 (this last a crucial defining passage, but not altogether inclusive in its definitions of the definitions of "drama" implied in Stein's text). I have reviewed Heroic Knowledge at more length in JAAC, XVII (1959), 402-3.

44 Answerable Style, p. 116.
Within that form definition continuously purifies, but what it purifies continuously passes beyond dramatic definition into the great and central mythic vision." The explanation is finally arrived at through a statement on Milton's perception: Stein acknowledges that there may seem a certain perverseness in applying "dramatic" as a defining label for *Paradise Lost*, but insists that Milton "as a man . . . saw the most significant human experience and human destiny itself as a kind of drama."

In sum, Stein reads the epic as a drama of mind, but since the process of mind is mythic, the poem ultimately becomes a myth which employs drama as its radical metaphor. Stein's conclusion to his later reading of *Paradise Regained* is cautiously similar: "Milton nowhere insists on the literal identification of the reader with the hero; the tension of that relationship is maintained throughout the poem; it is for every man's conscience to assess the symbolism." But if the case for the mythic end to which the drama is means in *Paradise Lost* does not seem totally convincing, it was at least argued. It is notable that we do not receive the symbolic reading of *Paradise Regained* as argument, but as epilogue: the passage I have cited occurs in the final paragraph of Stein's long analysis. Further, in a note appended to a summary of the four stages of Christ's spiritual development, Stein asserts: "What I have tried to express is a symbolism which is less historical than psychological, perhaps mythic." This is clearly an attempt to unite the "drama" and the "myth" which were earlier separated, but revealingly the myth has become only "perhaps mythic."

Ultimately Stein is a Bradleyan essayist in psychology, translating "for the modern reader the moral issues into what I hope are their still-recognizable forms" (p. 217). And since, as the

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45 Ibid., p. 117.
46 Ibid., p. 123.
47 *Heroic Knowledge*, p. 134.
48 Ibid., p. 223; cf. pp. 104-5.
notes frequently indicate, the critic's ethic has been influenced by Bergson and Buber, the translation naturally falls into the developmental rhythm of drama.\textsuperscript{49} Further, "In drama, the stream of motivation, once recognized above ground, following its natural course, allows us to believe in the existence of a real spring. We may speculate, legitimately and profitably, on what is below ground" (p. 60). But to take this last step, of course, is to abandon all pretense to conceive of the poem as "myth," or "metaphor" or even "object." It is to return it, rather, to the dynamic, but, therefore, shapeless, process of life. And yet, the contemporary revaluation of metaphor and myth induced even this self-conscious critic to misread his own aims, to believe that he was revealing static form in a temporal movement.

Rosemond Tuve is truer to both Milton's poetic and the contemporary temper in her reading of some early lyrics and the masque \textit{Comus} as complex metaphors; in short, we again find the apparent flow of drama being reinterpreted as a spatial object in which temporally separate points must be simultaneously perceived. Of \textit{Comus} she writes: "The whole myth had already become figurative, and \textit{in it} chastity even as literal continence is a type of something, shadows forth meanings as they operate in another order",\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Lycidas} "is grounded in metaphor. It is figurative speech from first to last" (p. 86). And at the close of her study she is explaining not only \textit{Comus} but Milton when she writes in phrases reminiscent of Heilman on \textit{Lear}: "allegory is not any series of little metaphors; it contains many such within a metaphor, which is continued" (p. 159). The readings which emerge from these premises are never extrapolations. They do not, as Stein's do, pour extrinsic worlds into the poem, but rather give shape (which, in such a metaphoric theory, is also meaning) to the world in the poem's image.

And fine success in illuminating \textit{Paradise Lost} was achieved

\textsuperscript{49} Cf. ibid., p. 226, n. 13; p. 227 n. 3.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton}, p. 138.
recently in Isabel McCaffrey's mythic analysis. More carefully than any previous reader, she has examined the working of the similes, the scenic areas, the imagery and discursive dialogue, to support conclusions which will by now sound familiar to my reader: “the geography of Paradise Lost provides a medium in which motion can take place without the awareness of temporal process — duration — that usually accompanies it” (p. 51); “this ability to apprehend time as a completed pattern gives it immediately a spatial quality; past and future become not periods, but places” (p. 53); “Milton experienced the world of his epic architecturally, in terms of mass and space. The modulation of time into spatial effects” was the result (pp. 76-7).

It might seem paradoxical to rank this critic with the “metaphorical” group, since she explicitly establishes a distinction: “metaphorical . . . styles in which meaning is enacted or adumbrated by analogous incidents and symbols, are . . . inappropriate for a poem which finds its subject in myth” (p. 38); and this, because in a “true” mythic poem the author believes the myth which, “far from being a symbolic version of some distant truth, is itself the model of which everyday reality is in some sense the symbol” (p. 16). But the significance of these statements is revealed by her later observation that when Milton “used metaphor and simile, the vehicle could almost without warning shift and become the tenor” (p. 108). For, actually, MacCaffrey's readings are “metaphoric” in that they consider the physical elements of the poem — light, dark, heights and depths — as themselves the affective articulation of the myth, rather than the backdrop of a theological poem. Indeed, this critic is the most truly “metaphorical” reader among Milton's admirers. But her difficulty in accepting the term arises from her implicit understanding of its weight; metaphor does not function as analogy. Its purpose, rather, is the conquest of temporal limitation, as is that of myth, if we understand the latter term as it has been defined in my earlier discussion.
In substantiating what is possibly a commonplace for a large body of current readers of poetry, who take for granted the symbolic form theories of Cassirer, one might be justified in simply recalling the influence from two decades of intensive public reading by Empson. But the most suggestive succinct statement on the function of metaphor with which I am familiar has been made by Sigurd Burckhardt. This critic reminds us that metaphor, the epitome of the poetic process itself, must effect a destructive action prior to its creative function. Because, argues Burckhardt, words are signs for things, the poet works in a medium which is debased by its removal from primary reference, a medium crucially different from paint, stone or musical chords with their existential immediacy. The poet’s effort, therefore, is to unchain words from “their bondage to meaning, their purely referential role, and . . . give or restore to them the corporeality which a true medium needs.” And it is precisely in metaphor that words not only break the distortions of discursive syntax which imply a nonexperiential “process,” but outrage and belie the insidious simplicity of perception which infects our ordinary use of language as a system of “signs.” The inference is clear: “Metaphors, then, like puns and rhymes, corporealize language, because any device which interposes itself between words and their supposedly simple meanings calls attention to the words as things” (p. 283).

It is my conviction that just here, in their varying degrees of

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61 Sigurd Burckhardt, “The Poet as Fool and Priest,” _ELH, XXIII_ (1956), 279-98; I quote from p. 280. Cf. the less elaborate but corroborative essay by Walter J. Ong, “Metaphor and the Twinned Vision,” _SR, LXIII_ (1955), 193-201. Francis Ponge and other French critics have been equally engaged with this conception: see J. Robert Loy, “Things in Recent French Literature,” _PMLA, LXXI_ (1956), 27-41, esp. 36-7. Krieger, _New Apologists for Poetry_, pp. 73-5, 128-32, warns of the communicative limits of such theory while supporting its pragmatic usefulness. The Chicago Neo-Aristotelians’ attacks on the more naive formulations of metaphoric operation are valid only against critiques which attempt to define the poem-as-object rather than the “poetic” mode. The separation of the two can also raise impasses we need not worry here (see Krieger, pp. 93-8, 197).
conscious recognition of this central truth about poetry's way of life, we find cause for the fascination in which metaphoric reading holds contemporary critics, nurtured in a culture which so persistently subsumes time in a spatialized vision of reality. Time is the destroyer; for some decades, perhaps in the wake of that happy progressivism which emerged as an organic and evolutionary theory of life, we gratified that great antagonist by giving him hold upon our imagination. But we can now perceive that fascination with temporal process as a rip tide across the grander movement of man into the world of vast spaces which he projects from within to envelop and still the turning axle of a never-present now. And if Milton, as the following analyses will attempt to confirm, is a poet of all others most abundantly responsive to this imaginative process, we can understand why he should have been so garlanded with attention in recent years, understand that in the end of all it is Milton, not Donne, who is the poet for our time, who speaks in our idiom.