

Review Articles

Milton: A Tercentenary Stock-Taking

Habent sua fata libelli—"books have their own destinies." It is not often, however, that such a destiny includes the elaborate celebration of a three-hundredth anniversary, as was the case in 1967 with the tercentenary of the publication of *Paradise Lost*. The four-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Shakespeare had been celebrated in 1964 and the seven-hundredth birthday of Dante in 1965, but none of their individual works had ever met with large-scale commemorative recognition. Among the far-flung conferences of scholars in honour of Milton's epic, one may mention Canadian gatherings at the University of Western Ontario and the University of Alberta, a Southern California meeting at the Huntington Library, and an Anglo-American series of lectures at the University of York, England. Other recent volumes on Milton, unrelated to such conferences and lecture series, have also been published. During the decades 1920-50, an acid tide of denigration had burst the critical dikes and flooded over most of the ancient meadows, but more recent critical studies have done much to reclaim and sweeten the fields, at least for serious scholars. The lectures and articles of 1967, now becoming available in book form, are valuable as the latest survey of the re-emerging Miltonic terrain.

The conference at London, Ontario, has produced a five-lecture volume,* edited by Dr. Balachandra Rajan, head of the Department of English at the University of Western Ontario. Each lecturer was left free to choose his own topic, yet the result, if not clearly structured, is not wholly invertebrate. As the Foreword explains, "If the responses to Milton's poem which are printed in this collection reflect anything in common other than the poem itself, it is surely the presence of the Woodhouse tradition. . . . What the various papers in this book have in common is the firm recognition that the text does not stand alone but is illuminated by and illuminates a properly chosen context."

Roy Daniells' introductory essay, "A Happy Rural Seat of Various View", takes as its theme, "the pleasure of living in the Garden of Eden, the skill and care with which Milton has managed its aspect and its prospect, the

**Paradise Lost: A Tercentenary Tribute*. Edited by Balachandra Rajan. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, in Association with the University of Western Ontario, 1969. Pp. xi, 140. \$5.00.

care with which he has provided everything Adam and Eve can require. . . . Within the garden there is a beautiful handling of spatial relations. . . . Adam's world—the sum total within his range of perception—appears firmly structured and rationally bounded yet flexible, open to movement and, indeed, illimitable. . . . Baroque grandeur and firmness of structure, Baroque logic and pervasive power are everywhere apparent. . . . Against this precision and resonance Milton deploys a ceaseless rippling flow of changing shades of light, of running water . . . and of perfumes delicately profuse and pervasive . . . the mind is haunted by the unbelievable richness of Milton's text, reaching out phrase by phrase to hold and keep us." Daniells finally has recourse to Dante, Raphael of Urbino, and J. S. Bach for concepts to illustrate the transcendence of the mundane by Milton's art. Northrop Frye, in "The Revelation to Eve", shifts from texture and structure to primordial myth in two sexual modes: "What we have been looking at in Milton's imagery is a particular way of relating the two great mythological structures on which the literature of our own Near Eastern and Western traditions has been founded. One structure is dominated by a male father-god, stresses the rational order of nature, and thinks of nature as an artifact, something designed and constructed. The other centres on a mother-goddess, perennially renewing the mystery of birth in the act of love." At the close of his paper, in a comment on Book XII, Frye contrasts Adam's clear survey of the future from the mount of rational vision with the sleep of Eve, the "humiliated mother dreaming of the vengeance of her mighty son". Arthur E. Barker, in "The Relevance of Regeneration", begins with a manifesto on behalf of Canadian erudition: "It is but right that, among other assertions appropriate to 1967, there should be occasions for representing the contribution of Canadians to international literary scholarship and critical interpretation." The significance of his title is emphasized repeatedly, as, for example, when he affirms that "the central point at which Milton differed from most of his contemporaries and successors [was] in arguing that dynamic reforms on the natural or domestic or political levels must depend on the spiritual and hence ethical regeneration of Englishmen." Hugh MacCallum follows with "'Most perfect hero': The Role of the Son in Milton's Theodicy." "Milton lived in an age of theodicies," he begins. "Central to most theodicies of the period was the role of the Son of God." Milton carefully maintains a *via media* between the austere Calvinist doctrine of election and the loose Socinian repudiation of any atonement at all. For Milton, Adam is unable to save himself; he has to find justification through Christ;

yet he learns, especially through the instruction of Michael, that there is a life-long experience of "sanctification" in which his own obedient will must share. When Ba'achandra Rajan, Cambridge's distinguished gift to Canada, finally discusses "The Web of Responsibility," he opens with a disagreement between Sir Walter Ra'leigh and E. M. W. Tillyard as to the crucial act of choice on which the epic turns. However, "Both accept the vast design and the vulnerable centre, the enormous pressures that are brought to bear on the enclosed moment in the walled-in garden." Rajan keeps emphasizing the vastness of Milton's epic structure, in which "the central action is widened in time by a flash-back and a movement forward (both epic devices and both neatly arranged in two courses of angelic instruction), just as it is widened in space by the two assemblies (again an epic device) and by the scope of the opening movement from darkness to light. These thrusts of expansion are unprecedented in their extent and, in combination with the confined setting of the crisis, they produce the impression for which Milton was always striving—the infinite structure encircling the infinitesimal nucleus." Or again, "The entire cosmic mobilization has been massed around and made to converge upon an active choosing centre. . . . Responsibility is the price of freedom, but it is also the means by which freedom finds itself." Canadian scholars may well be proud of this symposium.

The 1967 Milton lectures at the University of York have also issued in a volume,* omitting only (through modesty) a lecture, "The Comedy of *Paradise Lost*", by the editor, C. A. Patrides. The roster of fourteen lecturers consisted of seven Americans (John Arthos, Merritt Y. Hughes, Frank L. Huntley, C. A. Patrides, Mary Ann Radzinowicz, Irene Samuel, and Joseph Summers) and seven Britishers (J. B. Broadbent, Philip Brockbank, Bernard Harris, Brian Morris, F. T. Prince, T. J. B. Spencer, and J. B. Trapp).

Two of the participants brought in cross-bearings on Milton from the non-literary disciplines of music and art. Brian Morris, in "Not Without Song": Milton and the Composers", traces the various settings of Milton's poetry to music: the songs in *Comus*, three renderings, by Lawes, Purcell, and Arne; *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, by Handel; the *Song: On May Morning*, by Michael Festing; the Morning Hymn of Adam and Eve in Book V of *Paradise Lost*, by John Ernest Galliard; *Samson*, by Handel; a partial version of *Paradise Lost*, by Stillingfleet and Smith; another version, never performed,

**Approaches to 'Paradise Lost': The York Tercentenary Lectures*. Edited by C. A. Patrides. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969. Pp. xii, 265. \$9.50.

by Richard Jago; and, a far greater work, Haydn's setting of *The Creation*, based remotely on Book VII of *Paradise Lost*. When, at the great 1908 dinner at the Mansion House, London, in honour of the tercentenary of Milton's birth, the band of the Royal Artillery Regiment provided a program of musical settings of Milton, their selections will have been chosen from the foregoing compositions. J. B. Trapp, librarian of the Warburg Institute, University of London, contributed a lengthy paper on "The Iconography of the Fall of Man," with 167 footnotes and 28 plates. The graphic record began with wall-paintings in the catacombs at Rome and in a Christian baptistery at Dura Europos in the Syrian desert; then it followed with reliefs on sarcophagi, mosaic pavements, paintings in manuscripts of the Bible, and even such bronze work as Ghiberti's Porta del Paradiso in the Baptistery in Florence. There were great cycles of religious paintings (including the Fall) on church walls and ceilings, done by Michelangelo (Sistine Chapel) and Raphael (Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican Palace), and famous individual paintings by Titian, Rubens, and Tintoretto. Woodcuts for printed Bibles achieved greatness in the work of a man such as Holbein. An extraordinary etching by Rembrandt, dated 1638, was also shown. The survey ended at the age of Milton.

One of the finest lectures in the volume is "The Anti-Epic," by T. J. B. ("Terence") Spencer, a shorter preview of which in *The Listener* for July 25, 1963, some of us had relished so greatly that we clipped it out to share with our students. "For Milton," he explains, "the great poets of former days in Europe were not influences, but rivals; rivals to be surpassed. . . . Milton's manceuvring of the great poetry of the past, his placing of himself alongside, or above, the great poets of the past, was not pride or pomposity, but a stroke of wit. . . . Contemporary critical theory and practice have accustomed us to the notion of the 'anti-novel' and the 'anti-hero.' It is at last obvious what *Paradise Lost* is. It is the anti-epic. . . . Never was the death of an art-form celebrated with such a magnanimous ceremony, splendid in ashes and pompous in the grave. The death of tragedy was a mere decline into a whine and a whisper. But the death of epic was, in Milton's hands, a glorious and perfectly staged suicide." Comparable in gaiety of tone but without the same penchant for paradox is Joseph H. Summers' "The Embarrassments of *Paradise Lost*". Among this epic's commonly alleged disadvantages for the general English reader are its lack of any martial celebration of the nation's heroes, the specially created character of its language, and the fact that it makes no contribution to specific religions, to training for loquacious cocktail parties, or to the stability

of any human Establishment. On the other hand, it is the supreme epic poem for our generation: it presents the problems of human maturity, glorifies perfect sexuality, attacks war and militarism, espouses human freedom at all levels, is against all established order, including that of revolutionary power, is more subjective than any past literature, and presents both a universe larger than man and a joy beyond tragedy. Also capable of lightheartedness is J. B. Broadbent in "Milton's 'Mortal Voice' and his 'Omnific Word'". A propos of Milton centenaries in 1867 and 1767, he says: "It is more comfortable to remember our uncles than our great-grandfathers: uncles are jolly and human, like us, but grandfathers lead eventually to Adam and to God. Milton is not avuncular." Or again, contrasting Shakespeare-worship with the unpopularity of Milton, he explains:

We praise Shakespeare for being so much what we want ourselves to be—humane, percipient, eloquent, randy, a little bitter in middle age, ripe as a plum at fifty, joking at death. We use Milton the other way round: just as he projected onto Satan and Sin, Comus and Dalila, even the waters that drowned Lycidas, all that he feared and hated in himself, so we project onto him. He is rigid, puritanical, misogynistic, vindictive, he takes no interest in human beings, he is verbose without being witty, self-righteous yet torn by conflict, and his learning is a burden not only to him but to generations of students.

In a completely different style, Frank L. Huntley's "Some Miltonic Patterns of Systasis" turns back through Coleridge and Sir Thomas Browne to Plato for a module of universals in the balancing of two opposite or discordant essences, "the *Systasis* or harmony of these two in the mystical decussation". The chief reconcilable opposites for Milton are presented as male-female, union-with and separation-from good, good-evil, and Creator-creature. "All the essential doctrines of Christianity are Platonic systases." Irene Samuel's lecture on "*Paradise Lost* as Mimesis" lifts the last word of its title from Aristotle's definition of tragedy. "Like tragedy . . . epic poetry represents a human action. . . . The reader who has experienced the full mimesis may well exclaim *Infelix culpa!* unfortunate fall! The happy pair have cut themselves down to our stature, have cut *us* down to our stature. Whatever may be said for the world they enter, it is not the Paradise they have lost." In passing, she gives Samuel Johnson an ironic salute: "Johnson's every word on Milton can contribute to our understanding—if only we invert it." In F. T. Prince's lecture on "Milton and the Theatrical Sublime", we have a vigorous affirmation of the dramatic quality of this epic: "The structure of *Paradise Lost* is itself a

vindication of Milton's decision to abandon drama for epic; there is no need to cast around for his reasons. But is it not possible that among them was the realization that the subject could be treated much *more* dramatically in epic form? *Paradise Lost* contains far more action, drama projected more vividly and more immediately on the inward eye . . . Milton created what was in form a narrative, but in feeling and content a drama: a colossal pageant of dogma and sacred history." Some influence is alleged to have come to him from *L'Adamo*, Andreini's *sacra rappresentazione*, whose preface claimed that he was bringing the whole tragedy of Adam into the Theatre of the Soul (*nel Teatro dell' Anima*). The same reference is made by John Arthos in his lecture on "Milton, Andreini and Galileo", but he also stresses the differences: "Milton's language is as unlike Andreini's as his idea of the disparate realms of Heaven and Earth is unlike Andreini's idea of the macrocosm embracing the microcosm. . . ." Merritt Y. Hughes, in "Beyond Disobedience", deals with the verdict of A. J. A. Waldock that "if *Paradise Lost* is really a poem about the Fall of Man with a moral of obedience, it is a failure." Hughes denies the major premise. The disobedience of the Fall is complex. In *The Christian Doctrine*, I, xi, Milton mentions eighteen offences as involved in Adam's choice, and Eve's crimes were also incredibly numerous. As for a shining apocalyptic restoration in a new paradise on earth, Milton (and Hughes) will have none of it. Michael's explanation is clear: Salvation is "Both by obedience and by love, though love/Alone fulfil the Law (XII, 403-4)." "Within the Visible Diurnal Sphere: the Moving World of *Paradise Lost*," by Philip Brockbank, traces with singleness of purpose the settings of dawn and evening, day and night, in the fabric of the epic. A sample of his method comes early in Book XI, when Eve is deceived by the "rosie progress" of Dawn, only to have her hopes shattered by Michael's trail of light in the sky, like the track of a jet plane: "But the illusion cannot last, and its end is pre-figured by the coming of Michael in a movement of light contrary to the diurnal expectation."

It is typical of the current re-assessment of the poem that Mrs. Mary Ann Radzinowicz devotes a whole lecture, "Man as a Probationer of Immortality", to the rehabilitation of Books XI and XII. "It used to be said that the last books were divided and misshapen; they are not misshapen but are constricted to show that while the world to which Adam descends is all before him, the paradise he attains is all within. It used to be said that they were harsh and pessimistic; they are neither." Her first footnote gives a long list of critics,

chiefly in 1920-50, who had found these books gravely at fault; her second gives an equal list of critics in 1958-65 who have demonstrated the falsity of these charges. Still another champion of the newer view is John Reesing, in *Milton's Poetic Art* (Harvard University Press [Saunders of Toronto], 1968), especially on pages 53-135. Regarding Milton's consummate art, he lays down the dictum: "For Milton, decorum is always the grand masterpiece to observe; he can therefore always be counted on to follow obediently the principles of genre. . . ." Much the same principle has recently been stressed by E. A. J. Honigman in *Milton's Sonnets* (London and Toronto: Macmillan, 1966): "Like other writers of his day, he shaped every literary exercise, in prose and in verse, according to 'topics' established by earlier practice. All of his sonnets fall unmistakably into one or more of these categories, and it is therefore essential to study them in this larger context—which may bring out poetical intentions easily overlooked by the modern reader."

Finally, Bernard Harris's paper on Dryden's *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man* sets aside as biased both Andrew Marvell's lines in 1674 mocking Dryden's opera and Nathaniel Lee's extravagant verse flattery of the same work, and goes on to affirm the real achievement of Dryden: "But we can scarcely avoid recognizing that the dignity of Adam and Eve at the end of the drama has been established by Dryden's additional emphasis upon the transforming power of love." Anne Davidson Ferry has now devoted a whole book, *Milton and the Miltonic Dryden*, (Harvard University Press [Saunders of Toronto], 1968) to a comparison of the two poets in style and method:

Dryden's *The State of Innocence* is an offensive vulgarization of *Paradise Lost*. . . . *Absalom and Achitophel* is a powerful transformation of *Paradise Lost* into a new vision which is Dryden's finest long poem. . . . Both works present a view of our vicious and fragmented world where morality has been reduced to verbal chaos. . . . In the conflict between these literary strains [Renaissance and Augustan], the two greatest poets of the later seventeenth century explored the morality of language.

Issued not primarily as a tercentenary collection but as a volume in a new series of MODERN JUDGEMENTS, under the general editorship of P. N. Furbank, is a new anthology of critical essays on Milton,* ranging in time from Arthur Barker (1940) to Stanley Eugene Fish (1967). While one may quarrel

**Milton: Modern Judgements*. Edited by Alan Rudrum. London: Macmillan [Toronto: Macmillan of Canada], 1968. Pp. 320. \$6.75 (paper, \$3.75).

with Mr. Rudrum's view that the newer academic critics (overwhelmingly represented in the two sets of tercentenary lectures) have failed to provide "an answer to the fire from the other camp" (best represented by earlier denigrations from Eliot and Leavis), one may credit him with a finely diversified array of essays. Most acceptable to most Miltonists today would probably be "Milton and the Cult of Conformity", by Joseph H. Summers. Its superlatives are instructive. Milton is "the most uncompromisingly radical of all our major poets," yet he delivered "the most devastating attack in English on the mystical belief that the 'people' are the source of wisdom." He was "a man as God-intoxicated as Dostoyevsky who spent some of the most creative years of his life in constructing a radical and personal *summa theologica* which, Milton insisted, had no more authority than reason gave it." He was "the greatest classicist of his age or perhaps of the entire English Renaissance", but "did not study the ancients in order to imitate them so much as to compete with them—and to surpass them." He was "a 'Puritan' who placed a higher value on sexual love than did any other figure in English literature." If we "take the trouble to read his works, we are struck not by any sense of confusion or paradox, but by a ferocious singleness of purpose." He "could not see what he thought was the cause of liberty threatened without acting", and thus, having cancelled his visit to Greece in order to join the struggle for freedom at home, he later deliberately sacrificed his eyesight in his work on *The Defence of the English People*. His "major poems provide as exciting and challenging literary experiences as we are likely to discover in an age which has been justly labeled both 'the age of anxiety' and the 'age of conformity'." Professor Summers, as was noted above, also spoke in the lecture series at the University of York and may well be taken as representing the current academic attitude toward Milton.

In the Patrides volume, two slips ought to be corrected in a second edition. On page 199, the evening star, Hesperus, is obstinately setting in the *east* (where nothing *sets*); and on page 97, the genitive form *Christiados* is used four times, always instead of the nominative *Christias* or, still better, the English back-formation, "the *Christiad*". In my 1535 Cremona edition of Vida's epic, the title-page reads "Christiados Libri Sex", that is, "The six books of the *Christiad*." Both of these excellent sets of lectures would be still more useful if provided with indexes.

*Voltaire: Man On The Verge**

In the middle of the nineteenth century Baudelaire noted down in his journal: "I am bored in France above all because everybody there resembles Voltaire. Emerson forgot to mention Voltaire in his *Representative Men*. He could have written a nice chapter entitled: 'Voltaire, or The Anti-Poet', the king of idlers, the prince of the superficial, the anti-artist, the preacher of door-keepers. . . . Voltaire, like all idlers, hated mystery."¹ The judgment appears at first sight shocking, and yet it is not so far removed from the facts. Voltaire is the least ambiguous representative of the eighteenth-century enlightenment, namely of that endeavour which sought, as R. G. Collingwood has since put it, "to secularize every depth of human life and thought."² Baudelaire could call him superficial in as much as he stood for a kind of thinking which espoused sharp analysis and shrewd ordering while at the same time he rejected metaphysics most vehemently. He had no talent for or patience with the primordial poetic powers and mysteries with which the symbolist French poets wrestled. The truth that he sought was always one devoid of mystery; it was a truth open in principle to everyone in view of its utter transparency. Much of what he wrote remained therefore at the level of propaganda, and most often he simply acquiesced in contentious argument concerning the most trivial details. In him we might recognize one of the first examples of contemporary journalism, a clever guide of public opinion who guides in such a way that his guidance is in large part inoffensive and so unnoticed.

Aside from the obvious disagreements, what separated Voltaire (1694-1788) from such men as Baudelaire (1821-1867) was their differing conceptions of the function of the writer. And their respective conceptions were inextricably rooted in the historical epochs out of which and for which they wrote. For Voltaire the writer had to embark on the distinctive mission of social and

**The Complete Works of Voltaire*. Institut de Musée Voltaire, Genève/Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968, 1969-

No. 59 *La Philosophie de l'histoire*. Edited by J. H. Brumfitt (second edition, revised). Pp. 434. \$18.00.

No. 81 *Notebooks*, I. Edited by Theodore Besterman. Pp. 430. 1968. No. 82 *Notebooks*, II. Edited by Theodore Besterman. Pp. 431-790. 1968. \$40.00 the set.

No. 85 *Correspondence*, I (definitive edition). Edited by Theodore Besterman. Pp. xxxvii, 469. 1968. No. 86 *Correspondence*, II. Edited by Theodore Besterman. Pp. 498. 1969. \$25.00 each.

scientific criticism. It was a question of setting the church in its proper place, of attacking an antiquated system of justice, of exposing the charlatanism which then went under the name of medicine. Governed by his reason, the writer was to draw up the new precepts of theology, of philosophy, and of the various sciences in a language understood by the public of the times; and thus the public at large was to become a mass intelligentsia, the standard-bearer of truth and relevance. In this way the writer made it possible for every polemic, whether political, religious, philosophical, or even scientific, to be aired out in public. The writer was a kind of sounding board of the times. He received his impetus from the forces and drives of his historical epoch and was to boomerang that impetus back into the epoch with finesse and intensity, thereby governing and encouraging progress in human affairs. The *raison d'être* and function of art as seen by Voltaire and his eighteenth-century contemporaries was one of expression, one of re-creation. The literary art was still based on something pre-established, on the spiritual and practical structure of a society in which appearances had a more or less pre-determined even if evolving meaning.

Voltaire's ambition for mankind was sweeping, bold, optimistic. But the project as he envisioned it could not stand on its own for long. Already at the end of the eighteenth century the apparent stability of the newly established rationality, of which Voltaire was such an adamant prophet, began to break. Its fragility came most conspicuously to the fore in the quarrel which arose between Voltaire and Rousseau regarding culture and civilization. Their divergent attitudes, Rousseau's revolutionary indictments of civilization and Voltaire's conservative defence of it, were pointing toward changes which the next generation of writers, above all Baudelaire, were to experience and which we today are still living out in many of their consequences. Poets particularly had little sympathy with Voltaire, since by the middle of the nineteenth century artistic effort had undergone modifications which affected the conception of man's act of creativity. It was not enough for the artist or poet at the time of Baudelaire simply to study a wide variety of subjects in order to achieve an intelligent vision of human affairs; the task was rather to penetrate into some one subject to such an extent and in such a way that the wider range of human problems came into clearer view. By the time Baudelaire emerged on the scene the world and man's situation within it were undergoing a rapid upheaval. In Voltaire's time it was still possible to envisage the respectable world as a place where a small number of fully accepted masters and writers gave out

the outlines and details of man's cultural if not natural world. In those times the world appeared more or less stable, even in its progress, and the task of achieving an intelligent vision was simply one of adapting oneself to the essential features of this stability. Such was the new credo of reason. The task of the writer was similarly one of setting up stable channels for the achievement of an enlightened vision. At the end of the nineteenth century this paradigm no longer applied: for the simple reason that it no longer worked in a world the most conspicuous aspect of which, the greatest challenge of which, was instability. By the end of the nineteenth century, the world and the work of art were beginning to be experienced as dynamic; for the artist it became a question of learning to become engaged effectively in an on-going enterprise, a process rather than a state of affairs. For anything learned was surpassed in the next experience, and so learning rather than "having learned" was what counted.

If we consider for a moment Voltaire's views on literary criticism, that inquiry which deals with art, we can also see how divergent the modern thinking is on that subject from the eighteenth-century practice. Voltaire's literary criticism was consummated in the reactions of the man giving judgments about works in the name of his good taste. He was not interested in promoting principles as such but preferred to give rapid personal judgments, especially about the great works of the seventeenth-century French Golden Age. Voltaire was striking out against the tyranny of the then governing rules of art and against the moralistic prejudices contained in art-works. As a consequence much of his criticism remained couched within the framework of a polemic and thus never concerned itself with the more fundamental problems of art and art-interpretation. When we read later writers such as Baudelaire we get the feeling that they saw art primarily from the "inside" and as creation. The conception of creation and of criticism had become modified.

With the subsequent impact of Baudelaire's poetry and thought, the work of art came to be fully experienced as a work only when the critic participated reflectively in the process of recreation. Criticism became an art in itself: the art of participating in a process. In his essay "A quoi bon la critique",³ Baudelaire outlines the paths for modern criticism: Creative works receive their just due only when the critic participates in the creation which the creativity of the poet or artist has prepared. Such participation precludes treating art-works as material either for polemics or for the expression of one's own ego. Criticism itself is to take on a creative mood and temperament and

it is not to take a wholly outside view of what it considers. Criticism is in instance explicitly a particular stance rather than an allegedly uncommitted one. It is to open up "the most horizons". Finally, according to Baudelaire, "criticism touches at every moment upon metaphysics." It is to do not of what the poetic mind does, but something akin to what the reflective mind does. Baudelaire asked that the critic take part in the event of art and poetry rather than to convert it back into the status of some material in the world to be examined and used in and for other designs.

Aside from Voltaire's enticing but often nearly perverse satires against social evils, against priests, doctors, pedants, and philosophers, and against his fellow writers, what image of man and human effort emerges from his writings?

Man appears in the course of Voltaire's works as a creature more or less caught in the middle of the conflict between two forces, that of darkness and that of light, barbarism and culture, vulgar superstition and intellectual enlightenment. He saw man always on the verge between having to give up one (for the most part reluctantly) and the need to take up the other (for the most part hesitatingly). This dualism led to some peculiar medleys of thought. For instance, it followed that it was to man's advantage to give up the priestly notion of a divinely determined providence and yet also to his advantage to take up the cause of progress, to believe that any deliberate and planned development was by its own nature for the better. The result was that the doctrine of established harmony (which he attacked vehemently in the figure of Leibniz) was simply inverted and founded more or less emphatically upon the contingency of human responsibility. Similarly, Voltaire's conception of man implied the relevance and even necessity of "getting to know" all about the world, including the Orient and the Americas. In this regard he professed an interest in history which far transcended the interest that the church fostered or followed. And yet he saw in whole periods of human history, notably in that known as the Middle Ages (consistently dubbed the "dark ages"), nothing but the power of darkness. The result was that he both encouraged and discouraged enlightenment by means of history, according to whether the subject was secular or Christian in substance. "When Voltaire laid it down that 'all history is modern history', and that nothing was genuinely known before about the end of the fifteenth century, he was two things at once: that nothing earlier could be known, and that nothing earlier deserved to be known."⁴

For Voltaire, man had above all to obliterate the church from the horizon of human efforts (*écrasez l'infâme!*). However, his strange dualism reasserts itself again in the form of a paradox. He himself was a deist, not an atheist. For Voltaire, as for a number of other influential thinkers of the eighteenth century, religion "was a thing devoid of all positive value whatever, it was just sheer error, due to the unscrupulous and calculating hypocrisy of a class of beings called priests, who, they seem to have thought, invented it to serve as an instrument of domination over the mass of men."⁵ That is, religion is indicted only in the course of the indictment against its alleged social manifestation. God was still to be celebrated rationally, for He was simply the organizing principle ensuring the ground for the possibility of man's reorganization of his world. Voltaire's vehement attacks against the church were themselves religiously inspired: they were designed to help man win out against darkness by annihilating the mediators and placing him in direct confrontation with his God, namely the rationality of the universe. In a sense, Voltaire merely opposed his own religion, the principle of pre-established organization awaiting the awakening of man for its realization, to the established religion. It was not until Nietzsche that the problem of religion was both negatively and squarely met and analyzed, and Christianity found a fully respectable foe.

Because he maintains a vehemence remaining at the level of appearances, seeking for their reform but not their dissolution in favor of reality, Voltaire provides a perfect example and embodiment of the popular French spirit of elegance and reason. Profundity and truth are here equated with clarity, with "good criticism" in the popular sense. There is no doubt something to be said for this spirit. Nietzsche seems to say it when referring to Voltaire as "one of the last men who could ally within himself the highest freedom of mind and an absolutely unrevolutionary way of thinking."⁶ Freedom of mind is certainly a necessary prelude to a meaningful revolution.

The figure of Voltaire will continue for some time to symbolize this critical point of development of modern man. The University of Toronto Press has undertaken the Herculean task of preserving and sharpening awareness of his significance by bringing out a new critical edition of his complete works (the last definitive edition appeared nearly one hundred years ago). Upon completion it should comprise about 140 volumes as well as several volumes of indexes and bibliographies. It will supersede all previous attempts at compiling Voltaire's works, since it will include not only previously unpublished works, but also works which have been unedited since they first appeared. The editorial staff into whose hands the enterprise has been entrusted

consists of international scholars and specialists in the field who are contributing annotations and commentaries to the text and introducing each volume with a critical and historical account of the works themselves. The five volumes of *Correspondence*, the two volumes of *Notebooks*, and the *Philosophie l'histoire* which have already appeared testify to the seriousness of the enterprise. It should find an enthusiastic audience among contemporary students of the eighteenth century.

Mount Allison University

LILIANE WEISS

NOTES

1. *Oeuvres complètes*, Edition de la Pléiade (Paris, 1961), p. 1282. The English translations of the citations from Baudelaire and Nietzsche are my own.
2. *The Idea of History* (Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 76.
3. *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 877-78.
4. *The Idea of History*, p. 328.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
6. *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kroener Verlag, 1964), 176.

ESCAPIST

Gilean Douglas

Now that's a word for you. What does it mean?
 Oh, just that others do not live as we,
 They are divergent in the world they see
 Or like the fat when we prefer the lean.
 If they turn off the TV set and try
 To find a little peace or happiness
 And so keep sane in this colossal mess,
 They are escapist. Variance must die!

If they decide they do not choose to burn
 Hereafter or in town, that is escape;
 Although the cities came from those who ran
 Away from solitude, our frightened turn
 To God and death was terror of the shape
 Of life and all exigencies of man.