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"Lycidas" and the Reader's Response

I. Pastoral and the Reader

Recent critical work on "Lycidas" includes a number of first-rate analyses, particularly those written by Tuve, Rajan, Friedman, and Brisman; and it might even be argued that these readings imply a critical consensus.¹ But there remain several passages which confuse or trouble critics, or about which they have said relatively little. I will assume (borrowing terms discussed by Stanley E. Fish)² that these debates and omissions help to clarify important features of our response to the poem: the reader's response to "Lycidas" continually develops and structures itself from line to line; and the history of the responses of different readers can be found in the critical work. For "Lycidas" our expectations about the pastoral genre are crucial in forming and in understanding our experience of the poem; and (as critics) we enjoy the advantage in this instance of having Milton's first version of "Lycidas" in the Trinity manuscript, which highlights his effort to re-work the genre and guide our response to its conventions.

The section of the poem which begins "Where were ye nymphs?" offers a useful point of departure, since it is, first, a conventional ingredient of pastoral, and second, a passage which Milton revised. It opens with a question:

Where were ye nymphs when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas? (50 - 51)³

The reader's response proceeds from his acknowledgement of the pastoral convention, for which Rosemond Tuve provides this fine description:

Because it is so familiar an echo, his "Where were nymphs?" can and does carry all its old weight of a sympathy that extends throughout the great frame, and that connects natural powers specifically with poets. We accepted the sympathy when we recognized the genre, for it is perhaps the greatest and most moving conception pastoral has borne down the ages.⁴

As Tuve points out, these two lines continue the speaker's (and also the reader's) attempt to account for Lycidas's death. Because the pastoral setting usually connotes a sympathetic order in nature, the reader is prompted to form expectations about what will follow the appeal to the nymphs. Perhaps, for example, circumstances somehow prevented them from performing their duties; regrettably (for Lycidas and for us) the nymphs were elsewhere, but, if present, they surely would have led a successful rescue mission.⁵ The reader is next presented with a series of rejected possibilities:

For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old Bards, the famous Druids lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream. (52 - 54)

The failure to this point to locate the nymphs pressures the reader to discover where in fact they were; and it further encourages him to realize the consolation that will follow the pinpointing of that location—that there is, after all, a rational explanation for the nymphs' failure. The next line reveals this desire for an explanation more fully, but leaves unanswered the previous question of "Where were ye nymphs?": "Ay me! I fondly dream!" (55). The reader is stripped of his hope that the nymphs' location can (and will) be specified; but he still appears headed for some reassurance. "Where?" remains an unanswered question, but at least the nymphs' serviceable role is intact. The reference to "fondly" dream likely implies the speaker's affection for his drowned friend; but "fondly" also suggests—and I think this meaning is impossible to discount—"foolishly" and without reason.⁶ The next line seems about to grant the expected consolation: "Had ye been there—" But it is instead unremittingly denied: "Had ye been there—for what could that have done?" (56). The preceding lines create expectations about an action whose efficacy is finally discredited. Even if the nymphs *were* present at the site (still unspecified) of Lycidas's death, their presence wouldn't have made any difference.

The speaker next alludes to Calliope and Orpheus, enabling the reader to view the situation from a mythological perspective:

What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
 The Muse herself, for her enchanting son
 Whom universal nature did lament,
 When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
 His gory visage down the stream was sent,
 Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore? (57 - 62)

The figure of Orpheus, as Caroline Mayerson notes, embraces a range of associations: the musician and poet, the representative of civilized society, and even, in some exegetical circles, the type of Christ.⁷ But these all suggest reasons why Orpheus *should* have been rescued; and the death of this famous mythic and allegorical personage even more grimly reinforces the absence of a sympathetic order in nature. The new question of these lines ("What could the Muse?") follows upon two earlier ones: "Where were ye nymphs?" and "For what could that have done?" But the withholding of consolation is now intensified. "Before the question is completed," Leslie Brisman perceptively explains, "nature is described with the words "did lament"; the chance to do something is over, in the past tense."⁸ Not only efficacious action, but *all* action, is denied as a possibility; and the reader's expectations, deflected a few moments ago ("For what could that have done?") are now undercut more severely. As Brisman observes, "the reader is caught in the anticipation of the event and is shocked in reading the next lines to find it is already over."⁹ But still more can be said. Before at least the reader was presented with a verb: "have done"; action may have been deprived of its efficacy, but the nature of the action was at least considered, if only to be set aside. Now the reader is even deprived of a verb. He likely expects to read: "What could the Muse herself . . . *have done?*"; but the verb does not arrive, and the reader is left suspended, waiting for the description of action which fails to be forthcoming. Not only pastoral conventions, but now even syntax, fail to function properly.

Milton's revisions of the Orpheus passage clearly intimate his intention to undermine his reader's desire for action.¹⁰ In the Trinity manuscript, Milton wrote "*might* lament," rather than "*did* lament." To leave the verb in the conditional would have kept open alternatives: perhaps sometime in the future "universal nature" *might* extend its sympathy to Orpheus. But "*did* lament" closes down this option by placing the action, as Brisman remarks, "in the past tense"; this possibility is now unavailable, because it has been performed already. Milton also originally wrote "divine head," later correcting it to read "gory visage." The earlier version ascribed to Orpheus the noble and reverential aura summarized in Mayerson's essay. But the revision em-

phasizes death-deformed features (the "gory visage") rather than divine attributes. The reader is not allowed to glimpse the image of what Orpheus was in life, but is instead forced to visualize the change brought about by his death.

Roy Daniells notes in relation to the Orpheus passage that "the window on this vision of ghastly dismemberment instantly shuts. A meditation on fame ensues."¹¹ His judgment may seem at first to support Wilson Knight's well-known belief that "Lycidas" lacks "unity," and stands only as "an accumulation of magnificent fragments."¹² But both critics' reservations point interestingly to the poem's effect here (and elsewhere) on its readers: its refusal to provide smooth formal transitions, and its denial of comforting answers to the questions which pastoral raises. The reader comes upon a question ("Where were ye nymphs?"), expects an answer to unfold, fails to receive it, and is left with still more questions.¹³

The next question arises from the speaker's complaint that he is not rewarded for his activity:

Alas! What boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely slighted Shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse? (63 - 66)

He employs the pastoral fiction to protest the failure of his tasks to meet with fair compensation. Of what use are pastoral commonplaces when they prove unable to bring about the rescue of Lycidas, or to console those who remain for the fact of his death? The alternative is tempting:

Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair? (67 - 69)

The speaker has outlined two modes of conduct: his present and unsatisfying "trade," and the pleasant pastimes enjoyed by others. Which, the reader is invited to ask, will be judged preferable? How will the speaker adjudicate between conflicting vocations? But the anticipated choice is left unclear:

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of Noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days. (70 - 72)

As Merritt Hughes reminds us in a textual note, Milton's reference to "fame" as a motive for virtuous action expresses a Renaissance com-

monplace. But its authority again fails to reassure the reader. The first line appears to suggest that the speaker has decided in favor of the shepherd's "trade"; he bears up under trial for the eventual reward of "fame." But the reader's assent to this traditional notion barely survives into the next line. "Fame," whose worth was unquestioned a moment ago, is now declared an "infirmity." It may be desirable, but is inappropriate for the truly virtuous. The force of these lines can be better appreciated if the single line in parenthesis is omitted:

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
To scorn delights and live laborious days.

Here the run-on line offers a smooth transition; and the commonplace is untainted by any suggestion of its inadequacy. In the poem "fame" is assigned an ambiguous status; at best it stimulates good conduct, but for the wrong reasons.

Perhaps the reader presumes at this point that the speaker will clarify his position on "fame" in a different way: "The desire for fame leads to this hard labor, but look how worthwhile are the results." And the pressure to resolve this issue is all the greater for the reader, because of his desire to understand why "fame" must be judged dismayingly as an "infirmity." But the poem denies the issuance of "fame" by taking a vicious turn:

But the fair Guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th'abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. (73 - 76)

Not only is "fame" an "infirmity," and therefore an improper motive for virtuous conduct; it is also a reward which never arrives—to hope so is to be self-deceived. This realization is forced on the reader by the sudden appearance of "comes" in line 75. After the reader negotiates the first two lines, he likely assumes that "comes" belongs with "the fair Guerdon"; that is, he proceeds from "hope to find" to "think to burst out" to "comes," expecting to discover that the reward "comes" (say) only at the end of life, when it is too late to be truly enjoyed. But the truth is presented more cruelly. "Comes" is an activity not associated with "the fair Guerdon," but with "the blind Fury." The Fury's presence in the line (linked with "comes") is designed to startle the reader; it is quite unexpected, and interrupts both "the meditation on fame" and the effort to maintain the usual syntactical order. The reader

who hopes for direct action now receives it, as the Fury "slits" the threads of men's lives. B. Rajan nicely describes this effect:

The word "slit" placed with almost malignant accuracy in the halting march of the monosyllabic line, is potent in evoking a calculating power of destruction, all the more challenging because it is driven by blindness.¹⁴

Pastoral sympathy and positive action (labor which ends in deserved fame) are ruthlessly denied.

The reference to "blindness" is, as the Arriorm editors explain, Milton's addition, and suggests that the action is not only vicious, but indiscriminate. Yet, as the editors also mention, it is difficult to determine why Milton refers at all to "Fury" when he should (of course) mean "Fate." They are right, I think, to observe that Milton isn't guilty of "confusing Atropos, the third of the Fates, with the Furies." What he achieves by the substitution is continued surprise and disorientation of the reader. The editors duly note that "the function of Furies is always the avenger of crime"; but they add that, while Milton does present a "Fury," it is "not of course as an avenger of crime." This effort to distinguish Milton's usage from what is "always" true elsewhere makes it all the more likely to form part of the reader's response—he must work to redefine and somehow reorganize the roles of these mythological figures.

The rest of the line appears to mark a recovery: "But not the praise."¹⁵ (76). The speaker seems about to declare that, despite death, the laborer's fame survives: he will be remembered. But the reader quickly finds out that it is "Phoebus" who speaks: "But not the praise,/ Phoebus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears." (77 - 78). The "voice," as Brisman comments, undergoes "a correction";¹⁶ and the reader fails at first to perceive the identity of the new speaker. Phoebus redefines "fame":

Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to th' world, nor in broad rumor lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed. (78 - 84)

The reader now learns that the pastoral terms to which both he and the speaker have assented offer no source of fame or (immediate) consolation: if fame lives on at all, it does so in ways not accounted for by pur-

suits on "mortal soil." The "But" in the fourth line may (once again) connote to the reader the sense that at last truth—delivered authoritatively—will arrive. The answer may be harsh, but negative options (what "fame" is *not*) have been eliminated, and a full definition appears imminent. At first glance the answer seems conventional—the promise of a heavenly reward; and the fulfillment of the convention indicates a notable step forward in the reader's search for justice and order. Yet this Christian consolation is articulated by pagan deities. Brooks and Hardy comment helpfully:

The shock of transition from pagan to Christian is being cushioned by the poet's having one of the classic gods proclaim in effect that his "Kingdom is not of this world." But "cushioned" really overstates the case. Milton obviously wants us to feel some kind of clash . . .¹⁷

They are correct not only to point to the "shock" of the transition, but also to concede that "cushioned" overstates the case." Rather than "cushioned," I would propose "reinforced." This disjunction between pagan and Christian disorients the reader—it is as though Christ in *Paradise Regained* were to speak of the primacy of the classics. Rosemond Tuve's claim that the pagan and Christian elements are not incompatible may miss the point. She writes: "This is not a matter of 'Christian' and 'Pagan' but of direction and indirection, of a less or more figurative functioning in the language. Both are Christian."¹⁸ Even if Tuve is right, the lines remain problematical, the speaker and reader are again told to "expect" an action, and by way of a rather pat rhyme: "deed/meed." Expectations about fame are not resolved, but simply postponed.

II. *Some Specific Problems*

The Variorum editors term the question "Who or what is 'the two-handed engine'?" the "most debated crux in Milton"; and they spend some twenty pages listing various readings, debating alternatives, and choosing finally to return the issue to the reader: "It is the reader's privilege to make his own choice or to offer a new one, if that is possible." The most recent proposal has been made by Karl Felsen, who maintains that the "two-handed engine" is the scales of the Last Judgment. He explains:

Let the engine be a single uncomplicated easily recognizable one—the scales in other words—which may have to do the smiting figuratively, but certainly gains in violence and swiftness in that the sword is poised over it.

In other words the scales can share in the virtues of the sword simply because of proximity without an actual closer combining of the two images.¹⁹

Felsen's "single," "uncomplicated," and "easily recognizable" reading will not resolve the debate, and his phrasing—"let the engine be"—seems more an appeal than a solution. As Northrop Frye once remarked, "there are forty-odd answers"—there are now even more—and "none of them completely satisfactory."²⁰ But to add (as does Frye) that this critical confusion doesn't much matter—"the fact that they are not wholly satisfactory hardly seems to be important"—argues against the evidence to the contrary compiled by the Variorum editors and supplemented by Felsen and others.

The identity of the "two-handed engine" is only part of the story. What does it do? And when, and to whom, is it going to do it? David Daiches alludes to these issues when he states that, whatever the "two-handed engine" is, it indicates that "retribution is certain through a device which suggests purposive action on the part of society."²¹ Of course "certain" implies the magnitude of the problem: When is *that*? Rosemond Tuve, perhaps referring to Daiches, argues that "it seems difficult to press the image, as many critics do, to answer the question 'when will it?'"²² But readers *do* "press the image" in this way, and to claim otherwise is to ignore their collective testimony.

As the variety and range of the critical work imply, the lines on the "two-handed engine" beg more questions than they answer:

But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more. (130 - 131)

The reader's hopes for "retribution" depend upon knowing the precise referents for the image—a knowledge which is withheld. This indefiniteness is crucial to the effect: reassurance seems far away when the reader cannot determine how the action will come about (how? and by whose hands?). The reader is not only deprived of the *kind* of action, but left waiting for it to occur: it stands "ready to smite once," but doesn't. Perhaps the reader expects that "once" will be pinpointed as the line continues; or perhaps he assumes that the next part of the line will describe those upon whom the "two-handed engine" will execute its business.²³ But there is finally no assurance given that good and evil men will receive their just rewards; and there is no precise naming of who or what will "smite" when (and if) the time arrives. In one sense the

action occurs even before it happens—a disturbing paradox which becomes clearer with the next phrase: “and smites no more.” At first the action seems *about* to take place (“stands ready to smite once”), and then it appears *already* to have taken place (“and smite no more”). Instead of finding out when that “once” will be, the reader discovers “no more”: time runs out even before it begins.

The much-admired flower passage follows:

Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
 The tufted Crow-toe, and pale Jessamine,
 The white Pink, and the Pansy freakt with jet,
 The glowing violet,
 The musk-rose, and the well-attir'd Woodbine,
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
 Bid Amaranthus all his beauty shed,
 And Daffadillies fill their cups with tears. (142 - 150)

Tillyard notes the “incredible beauty” of this passage;²⁴ and Wilson Knight comments on its “Spenserian fluidity” and “luscious music.”²⁵ But its beauties are complicated by the word “bring,” which again raises questions about action and agency (when? where?). The next line describes the action to be performed, but doesn’t locate it specifically: “To strew the Laureate Hearse where Lycid lies.” (151) “Where” and for what purposes Lycidas “lies” are exactly the questions that the reader has been unable to answer. The shortcomings of the whole procedure strike home in the next lines:

For so to interpose a little ease,
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise. (152 - 153)

The reader is now dismayed to learn that this “luscious music” occurs as part of the speaker’s deliberate self-deception: the request to “bring” flowers is no more than a “false surmise.”

What follows is far from heartening:

Ay me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
 Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
 Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
 Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
 Or whether thou to our moist vows denied,
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
 Where the great vision of the guarded Mount
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold. (154 - 162)

This new panoramic perspective begins again the effort to find Lycidas. But the "shores" and "sounding seas," rather than cooperate to return the body, conspire to "wash" it "far away"; and the phrase "where'er thy bones are hurl'd" even more firmly denies a beneficent nature—Lycidas's body could be anywhere. Milton's revisions are again suggestive. The first version of the poem had "floods" instead of "shores"; the final version implies that the land (as well as the sea) works to prevent the body's return. And Milton's decision to replace (in the first version) "the humming tide" with "the whelming tide" connotes an additional violence and intensity: nature not only denies pastoral appeals for sympathy, but actively fights against them.

The "great vision" referred to in these lines has been fully glossed by the Variorum editors; they carefully discuss matters of distance, location, function—everything, in other words, that we do *not* know about Lycidas. The next line presents the famous petition: "Look homeward angel now, and melt with ruth." (163) Most commentators are confident that the Angel addressed is St. Michael, but others argue for Lycidas himself. Yet let us assume—though the dispute about identity helps to make my point—that the Angel *is* St. Michael. How comforting is the request that he "look homeward"? The editors record their uneasiness by noting the "sudden shift in attention from Lycidas"; and, while they add that this "need not trouble us," their disclaimer only heightens the necessity for an explanation. The Angel "looks" (away from Lycidas) and "melts" with pity (that is, if the speaker's petition is granted), but he doesn't *do* anything. Instead a new request is made: "And, O ye Dolphins, waft the hapless youth." (164) The action presented here ("waft") is pathetically weak and inadequate: "Waft" where? From where? What are its points of reference and relation to Lycidas? Is he merely "hapless," unfortunate, the victim of bad luck? The allusion to the dolphins is equally disconcerting. The Variorum editors' list of probable and possible references divides basically into two groups. One includes the story of Melicertes, whose drowned body was returned to shore by a dolphin; others in this group similarly refer to returns of dead figures. The second, however, emphasizes rescues of still-living figures, such as Arion, whom dolphins carried safely to shore. The reader therefore confronts an allusion capable of what seems to be mutually exclusive interpretations: the return of a dead figure or a successful rescue. The availability of a great deal of evidence on both sides makes problematical the reader's efforts to privilege one over the other. Or perhaps the reader feels that the context precisely *does* warrant an allusion which implies (since Lycidas is dead) the return of a dead figure. Then he

would be faced with the bitter reminder of that second group of allusions, which refer to those (unlike Lycidas) who are still alive, and none of which are applicable here.

The real transition in the reader's experience comes about in the next lines: "Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more." (165) While this is of course another convention—one "widely accepted" by both classical and Christian writers—the presence of the convention hardly accounts for the reader's surprise. My term "transition" is in fact misleading because there isn't any "transition" in the poem's formal argument. The movement is, as Donald Friedman finely explains, experiential rather than formal:

It is crucial that we realize that Milton forbids us to feel that we understand how the swain has come to this knowledge of the truth. The transformation he undergoes has nothing to do, in the poem, with a logical or sequential argument or demonstration; nothing he is told, nothing he hears, can account for his grasp of the new truth he promulgates to the listening shepherds.²⁶

This leap to faith is not confined to the speaker, but extends to the reader, for him to affirm or deny:

For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor. (165 - 166)

The first line pressures the reader to select one of two possible interpretations:

1. That Lycidas, the object of your "sorrow" (the word "sorrow" would be in apposition to Lycidas) is not dead after all; he lives.
2. That the *sorrow* you feel for Lycidas is not dead; you should feel disturbed by the demand to "weep no more," since your sorrows continue.²⁷

The reader may bear witness to the truth, testifying that Lycidas "is not dead," whatever the evidence to the contrary. Or else he may reject that faith as unwarranted by the external evidence. (Of course that the speaker's faith *is* unwarranted by the evidence is exactly the point.) The next line tears the reader's choice: "Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor." (167) The literal truth is that Lycidas has drowned, and that his body lies somewhere beneath the "wat'ry floor." For the reader who has rested on the literal details the literal truth remains the whole

truth, a bitter temporal reality. But to the reader who has affirmed his faith, the literal is there only to be transcended by a higher truth, a new interpretive rule which sweeps aside the evidence of the phenomenal world.²⁸ What the reader of "Lycidas" finally takes away as consolation depends upon how he sees—whether he rests on literal facts, or creates new ones.

NOTES

I would like here to thank my friend Jackie Miller for her helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.

1. Rosemond Tuve, *Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 73 - 111; B. Rajan, *The Lofty Rhyme* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 45 - 55; Donald Friedman, " 'Lycidas': The Swain's Paideia," *Milton Studies III*, ed. James D. Simmonds (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), pp. 3 - 34; and Leslie Brisman, *Milton's Poetry of Choice and Its Romantic Heirs* (Cornell University Press, 1973). Throughout this essay I shall also make extensive use of the admirable *Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton*, vol. II, part two, ed. A.S.P. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).
2. Professor Fish's most recent exposition of his theoretical views occurs in "Interpreting the *Variorum*," *Critical Inquiry* 2 (1976), pp. 465 - 485.
3. All quotations will be taken from *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957).
4. Tuve, p. 97. Useful background studies of the pastoral convention are provided by James Holly Hanford, "The Pastoral Elegy and Milton's 'Lycidas,'" 1910, rpt. in *Milton's "Lycidas": The Tradition and the Poem*, ed. C.A. Patrides (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1961), pp. 27 - 55; and by Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," *College English* 34 (1972), pp. 352 - 371. Alpers observes that "in fact all the elements of 'Lycidas' are traditional in pastoral" (p. 367). Cf. also on this point Hanford, *A Milton Handbook* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), pp. 134 - 140, at p. 136; and also Jon S. Lawry, *The Shadow of Heaven: Matter and Stance in Milton's Poetry* (Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 105, 108.
5. Cleanth Brooks and J.E. Hardy, in "Essays in Analysis: 'Lycidas,'" 1951, rpt. in Patrides, op. cit., pp. 136 - 152, helpfully testify to the reader's expectations here: "On the day of Lycidas's death the nymphs were not playing where one would have expected them to play. The speaker knows this—because, had they been there, they would surely have tried to save Lycidas" (p. 141).
6. This reading is supported by the Variorum editors.
7. Caroline Mayerson, "The Orpheus Image in 'Lycidas,'" *PMLA* LXIV (1949), pp. 189-207. She notes in summary that Orpheus was seen as "a revered musician-poet-prophet-teacher who had sung of God and creation, whose songs had affected man and beast, stock and stone, even the inhabitants of Hades. His music and his teachings had contributed to the establishment of a harmonious and civilized society. His musical skill, his power over nature, and his premature death kept alive his historic association with the pastoral elegy. To the Christian world, his personality and his accomplishments invited comparison with those of other venerated prophets, both heathen (the Druids, among others) and sacred (Christ). Finally, for a society traditionally inclined to allegorical interpretation, Orpheus became a symbol of human wisdom directed to social ends, the civilizing force which renews itself, despite periodic destruction" (p. 198).
8. Brisman, p. 250.
9. *Ibid.*

10. Commentary on Milton's revisions is provided by J.B. Leishman, *Milton's Minor Poems* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), pp. 246-343, at pp. 291ff.; and by Rajan, pp. 47, 52. Cf. also C.F. Stone, "Milton's Self-Concerns and Manuscript Revisions in 'Lycidas,'" *MLN* 83 (1968), pp. 867-881. Patrides' list of 'corrigenda' and textual notes in his edition of the poem, op. cit., pp. 10-11, 233-236, is also helpful.
11. Roy Daniells, *Milton, Mannerism, and Baroque* (University of Toronto Press, 1963), pp. 37-50, at p. 39.
12. G. Wilson Knight, *Poets of Action* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1967), p. 28.
13. As my analysis suggests, I agree with Friedman that "the attitude of questioning" is "at the heart of the poem" (p.5).
14. Rajan, p. 50.
15. Here I follow Alpers' suggestion that the quotation marks, as printed in Hughes' edition, be omitted. Alpers points out that these are modern additions, not part of Milton's original text. (cf. p. 367).
16. Brisman, p. 220.
17. Brooks and Hardy, p. 144.
18. Tuve, p. 76.
19. Karl Felsen, "The 'Two-Handed Engine', A Balanced View, *Milton Quarterly* 9 (1975), pp. 6-14, at p. 10.
20. Northrop Frye, "Literature as Context: Milton's 'Lycidas,'" in *Fables of Identity* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), pp. 119-129, at p. 124.
21. David Daiches, from *A Study of Literature*, 1948, excerpted in Patrides, op. cit., pp. 101-119, at p. 115.
22. Tuve, p. 77.
23. R.W. French, in his fine essay "Voice and Structure in 'Lycidas,'" *TSLI* XII (1970), pp. 15-25, seems to be the only critic to call attention to these possibilities (cf. pp. 22ff.).
24. E.M.W. Tillyard, *Milton* (1930; rpt. New York: Collier Books, 1967), pp. 70-74, at p. 73.
25. Wilson Knight, p. 51.
26. Friedman, p. 18; cf. also French, pp. 15, 20-21.
27. Douglas Bush, in *The Portable Milton* (1949; New York: The Viking Press, 1968), chooses to punctuate the line as follows: "For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead." Professor Bush tidies up the packed syntax, but I think at the expense of eliminating a crucial ambiguity.
28. The word "though" also may provide a second chance to the reader who refused the leap to faith; because it implies a contrast with the preceding line, it may prompt such a reader to reread that line and perhaps re-think his position.