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On First Looking into Milton's Shakespeare

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ABSTRACT For Miltonists and early modern scholars in general, the identification of Milton's copy of Shakespeare's First Folio through the combined work of Claire Bourne and Jason Scott-Warren was exhilarating. At last there seemed hard proof of a bridge between the writers whom Samuel Taylor Coleridge described as the "twin peaks" of English literature. But what do Milton's marginal brackets and editorial emendations tell us? This article addresses some of the patterns that can be found in the folio and considers how they might be connected to major concerns in Milton's poetry, particularly through his reading of *Romeo and Juliet*.

KEYWORDS Shakespeare, First Folio, *Romeo and Juliet*, time, night

Milton's copy of Shakespeare's First Folio slumbered innocently and without undue attention for almost eighty years in the lovely Philadelphia Free Library. Its ownership was only identified in 2019 through an astonishing series of events that began when an American scholar, Claire Bourne, published an essay describing and analyzing in detail the annotations in the folio. In England, Jason Scott-Warren, who had an essay in the same collection as Bourne's piece, read Bourne's paper and linked her descriptions of the method of editorial intervention and her samples from the handwriting to Milton.¹ He posted his observations online, where they were seen by a wide range of scholars around the world. Where Bourne and other earlier editors had thought there were two readers, based on differences in ink and handwriting, Scott-Warren suggested that the different hands reflected well-known developments in Milton's handwriting in the 1630s, especially

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his switch from an epsilon to Italianate “e.” He noted also how the editorial approach was consistent with the other editions we have from Milton’s library. Though COVID-19 soon made it impossible for many other scholars to look at the manuscript in person at that time, on the basis of Bourne’s original work, Scott-Warren’s arguments, and now the availability of a digitalized version, other Milton scholars confirmed this astonishing find.²

This discovery now gives us exciting evidence of Milton’s engagement with Shakespeare and has implications for our understanding of both authors and their places in literary history. But what exactly does the folio tell us? How can we read Milton as a reader of his greatest and most formidable English precursor? While answering such questions will take time and a good deal of teamwork, including further comparisons with the other texts Milton annotated, I want to make here a few preliminary suggestions. Some of these are rather general, others are more detailed if speculative.

A few things seemed immediately clear. On the basis of the dates of the quartos likely used for variant readings, as well as the publication dates of the sources cited, Bourne argues that the annotations were made in the 1630s, a period that was of course crucial in Milton’s creative development.³ Scott-Warren’s identification of the two hands suggests that, while we cannot know exactly when the folio was purchased (aside from sometime after 1623), Milton seems to have read parts of it at least twice during this time. The markings for *Romeo and Juliet* especially give us evidence of two readings: an earlier reading when Milton inscribed the prologue, missing from the folio, on the last page of *Titus Andronicus* and just facing the opening of *Romeo and Juliet*, and a later reading probably sometime around or after 1637 when Milton scored his own insertion, reread the play, and added a number of editorial variants (see fig. 1). The date of 1637 was offered by Bourne as a number of editorial insertions seemed to derive from the 1637 quarto published by John Smethwick, whose edition of *Hamlet* of the same year Milton seems also to have consulted at this time. However, he also apparently knew other editions: the early addition of the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* shows that even when reading the folio at some point well before 1637 he understood that something was missing.⁴

The identification adds to our small list of known books from Milton’s library, following hot on the heels especially of William Poole’s important discovery of Boccaccio’s *Vita di Dante*, with annotations also made around this time. It is useful to compare and contrast the marginalia in these works. As Poole has shown, Milton’s markings of the *Vita*, the only part of his

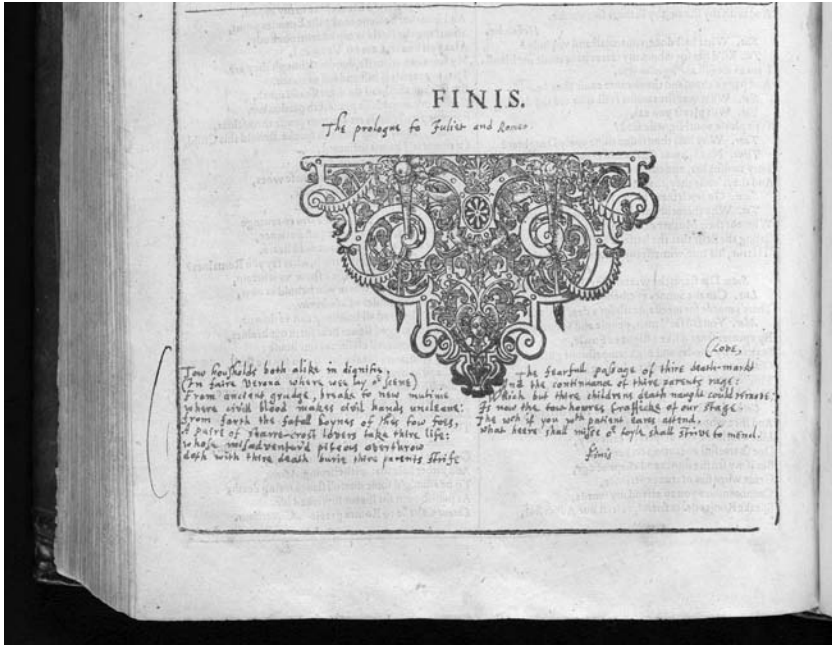


FIGURE 1 Inscription in the Free Library of Philadelphia First Folio, sig. G6v. Courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department.

identified collection referred to in his *Commonplace Book*, helps us see aspects of his early intellectual and poetic development.⁵ Poole is especially interested in how Milton was drawn to Boccaccio's presentation of the ideal life and character of the poet and modeled his own upon it.⁶ But he notes also Milton's careful attention to the difference between the earlier 1544 and the censored 1576 editions of Boccaccio's work, remarking how Milton approached the text not just as a reader but as a budding collator alert to the variations between editions.⁷ Such a clear example of how a text's meaning might be warped through later editorial intervention, especially that of the old enemy, papal authority, may have sowed seeds for Milton's later attack on censorship in *Areopagitica*.⁸ But it also shows a developing editorial eye, evident as well in the *First Folio* annotations: an awareness of how different editions can shape and, as in this case, reverse authorial meaning by what they leave out, add, or merely mangle.

A text that links Milton to Dante, one of his greatest recent epic predecessors, and that shows his early reading on the character of the ideal poet, is of course exciting. But the discovery of Milton's copy of Shakespeare's

plays seems even more potentially explosive. As Scott-Warren noted dryly: "If this book is what I think it is, it's quite a big deal, since Shakespeare was, as we know, a huge influence on Milton."⁹

It is perhaps even more of a big deal, though, because not everyone does know or agree that Shakespeare was a huge influence on Milton. The relation between these two great poets has long been debated. At one extreme, Terence Howard-Hill defiantly proclaimed that Milton either did not know or was completely uninterested in Shakespeare's plays.¹⁰ Noting that there is no direct evidence that Milton ever saw or even read the plays, Howard-Hill read the praise in Milton's "On Shakespeare," published in the 1632 second folio of Shakespeare's plays, as simply conventional panegyric required for the occasion and not indicative of any sincere feeling, anxious or otherwise. Although editors from the eighteenth century on have repeatedly cited echoes of Shakespeare in Milton's verse, Howard-Hill argued that these are merely commonplaces shared by the two writers, and indeed many others.

Howard-Hill's stout denial of any relation reflects a broader tendency in English literary history to treat the two great writers as poles apart. Milton's depiction of Shakespeare as "sweetest *Shakespear* fancies childe" who warbles "his native Wood-notes wilde" (*L'Allegro*, lines 133–34), a carefree, spontaneous, original genius, offers a very different kind of poet from our usual picture of the careful, studied, serious, and more clearly *Penseroso* Milton.¹¹ Building on Milton's own representation, the formative editions and commentaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made the two writers stand for antithetical types of poets and poetry: the natural vs. the artificial, the native vs. the foreign (i.e., classical), the dramatic vs. the epic.¹² In the early twentieth century, the gulf was widened by critics such as F. R. Leavis and Middleton Murry, who celebrated an organic and nourishing Shakespeare in order to denigrate a mechanical and deadly Milton—as Murry melodramatically put it, "If there is death in Milton, there is life in Shakespeare."¹³ The caricaturish contrast between a Miltonic egotistical sublime and a Shakespearean negative capability, between a creative self that is closed, rigid, and monolithic and one that is open, flexible, and protean, still lingers.¹⁴

The attraction of constructing handy black-and-white poetic types, a practice based on the classical model of *synkrisis*, is hard to resist.¹⁵ Yet scholars have also long recognized that there are many echoes of and allusions to Shakespeare in Milton's early poetry, which suggest a more complex relation between the two poets. Critics have also broadly compared Satan

with Shakespearean characters. At the same time, there are few obvious verbal echoes of Shakespeare in Milton's later works. Leavis and Wilson Knight therefore argued that the young Milton started off well following in Shakespeare's footsteps, and then took a wrong turn that was disastrous for the course of English poetry.¹⁶ Various critics in the 1980s—Leslie Brisman, Maureen Quilligan, and most influentially John Guillory—adapted this model of Milton's development, turning it into a more fortunate fall.¹⁷ They agreed that the echoes in the 1645 volume show that the young Milton read and was deeply attracted by the enchanting power of Shakespeare's verse. But, they argued, as he matured, Milton rejected Shakespeare, whom he saw as a pernicious poetic and moral influence, and harnessed his poetics to the visionary line of Edmund Spenser, the writer whom, according to John Dryden, Milton explicitly pronounced his "original."¹⁸ The poem "On Shakespeare" emphasizes the gulf between the two types of writers, as a fluent and fluid Shakespeare whose "easie numbers flow" creates "wonder and astonishment" that presumably petrifies a writer whose art is shamefully "slow-endeavouring" (lines 10, 7, 9). To become a writer, the poem suggests, Milton may have psychologically as well as morally needed to reject Shakespeare for the Spenser with whom he had more in common.¹⁹ Milton's description in *Eikonklastes* of Shakespeare as "the Closet Companion of these his [Charles I's] solitudes" has also encouraged the theory that Milton distanced himself from a Shakespeare who supported a pernicious monarchy.²⁰

As I noted, this image of the two writers as antitheses has also been extraordinarily persistent, despite valiant attempts of Alwin Thaler, Rachel Trickett, and especially Paul Stevens to show Milton's deep engagement with his recent and perhaps quite intimidating model.²¹ The identification of Milton's copy of the folio cannot tell us anything about Milton's reading of Shakespeare after his blindness. But it does offer evidence of a prolonged engagement, which took place over a period of years that were crucial in Milton's poetic and intellectual maturation. And we know that his early readings lodged deeply in his encyclopedic memory. It provides the ocular proof Howard-Hill demanded, and it can help us start seriously rethinking the relation between these two very different but not antithetical authors. So, it does seem a pretty big deal indeed.

Still, there are things that the folio cannot tell us. Given our assumption that Milton's relation with his great predecessor might show some Bloomian anxiety or at least just plain testiness, we might fantasize about finding examples of direct confrontation. As Scott-Warren asks, "Wouldn't

his copy be bristling with cross-references, packed with smart observations and angrily censorious comments?"²² It's not. The markings are mostly editorial suggestions or brackets that appear to score passages of interest. While intriguing, these can also be baffling. Bourne and Scott-Warren rightly observed that Milton highlights *most* of what we would consider the major speeches, as if he were already identifying Shakespeare's greatest hits. But by our standards there are some surprising omissions. He does not mark Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech—though he highlights "Oh what a rogue" as well as the speech to the players. He does not note Mark Antony's funeral oration in *Julius Caesar* and indeed in his reading of that play does not seem interested in the character of Antony, concentrating mostly on Brutus and Cassius. He does seem interested in the Antony of *Antony and Cleopatra*, but here, perhaps surprisingly, not in Cleopatra: he marks, rather oddly in fact, some bits of Antony's death scene (4.15–4.16) and then ignores Act 5 entirely.²³ Are these lapses in critical acumen? Throughout the folio he marks songs, but he misses the gem of the Fool's song in *King Lear* (3.2.74–77) and ignores the fairy songs in the later part of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It might not surprise us that there is no marking in *Titus* and only one in all three of the *Henry 6th* plays (3 *Henry 6* 5.7.7–10), and one (a song) in *Henry 8* (3.1.3–14). It does make sense from the number of echoes and allusions in Milton's early poetry that *The Tempest* is heavily marked. But it seems rather odd therefore that the markings in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a play that is echoed frequently in Milton's works, stop dead after 2.1.155, and those of *Antony and Cleopatra* cease with Anthony's death (the last lines bracketed are 4.15.34–37, as Antony is heaved up onto the monument).²⁴

We cannot assume of course that because Milton did not mark such key passages, he did not read them and find them interesting. And we also cannot assume that, because they are the most heavily annotated plays, he was most interested in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. As John Hale notes in his study of Milton's copy of Euripides, annotations per se only tell us which passages Milton felt needed most editorial attention.²⁵ In this case too, as Bourne notes, the apparent editorial frenzy over *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* might have been generated simply by the publication of the 1637 quartos of those two works which allowed new and detailed readings. Still, it does suggest that Milton already knew these two plays specifically well and so could be alert to variants and how they changed meaning.²⁶ The annotations are not systematic line by line, nor, as Bourne notes, are they complete. They suggest the reading of a sensitive reader with an excellent

but not perfect memory, who knew the folio and some of the quartos well and was conscious of how works could vary substantially in meaning and effect depending on their printed form. They show that Milton is not reading and marking for performance as an actor would; nor like the common seventeenth-century reader is he simply looking for pithy lines for his Commonplace Book, as he doesn't use any of them. If, as Poole has suggested, Milton read Boccaccio's *Vita* as a template for the ideal life and character of the poet, he appears here to be using Shakespeare as a guide to the technique of a great writer. He is watching how a master poet works: studying Shakespeare's technique, language, imagery, and characterization, trying to figure out how he might learn from and adapt them for his own concerns. The creative process of reading, assimilating, and responding is never straightforward, but Shakespeare is being sublimed into the dark materials in Milton's brain that he drew on to make his own poetry.

There are therefore places where we can see parallels with passages in Milton's own works or with his interests broadly. Given the probable date of his readings, it makes sense that he paid attention to passages concerned with chastity. (Once you posit Milton as the reader, this pattern leaps out.) He notes Prospero's stern warning on the inviolability of virginity in *The Tempest* (4.1.13–23), though in *Measure for Measure* he brackets Angelo's sly admission that virtue provokes violation (2.2.180–86). In *All's Well that Ends Well* (4.2.42–51), he marks Diana's spirited defense of her chastity as a jewel she will not relinquish. But as in the Commonplace Book where he gathers opposing opinions, he notes, too, Theseus's unappealing portrayal of the life of chastity in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1.1.69–78). In *Romeo and Juliet* Milton also brackets Romeo's description of his first love, Rosaline, a conventionally unattainable Petrarchan lady who will

not be hit

With Cupids arrow, she hath Dians wit:

And in strong proofe of chastity well arm'd:

From loues weake childish Bow, she liues vncharm'd (1.1.208–11)²⁷

—an image that anticipates the Lady's impenetrable armor of virtue imagined in a *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle* (lines 420–24, 447–52). Milton also brackets Claudio's speech on the terrors of dying in *Measure for Measure* (3.1.117–31), which is echoed by Belial in *Paradise Lost* (2.146–51), and, as has often been noted, Shakespeare's newly coined adjective “viewless” in that same passage (*Measure for Measure* 3.1.123) makes it into the

Mask (line 92).²⁸ In *Hamlet* (3.3.35–72), Milton highlights Claudius’s failed attempt to repent and pray, which is often compared with Satan’s consideration of repentance in *Paradise Lost* (4.79–113). He marks Perdita’s catalogue of flowers in *The Winter’s Tale* (4.4.103–34), which includes the “pale Prime-roses, / That dye *vnmarried*, ere they can beyold / Bright Phoebus in his strength” (122–24, emphasis added). The Trinity manuscript version of *Lycidas* similarly has “the rathe primrose that *unwedded* dies,” though in 1645 the phrase has become the “rathe Primrose that *forsaken* dies” (line 142, emphases added).²⁹ Scott–Warren also points out how Milton marks Ariel’s song in *The Tempest* (1.2.375–87):

*Come vnto these yellow sands,
and then take hands:
Curtsied when you haue, and kist
the wilde waues whist.*

The unusual rhyme between *kist* and *whist* appears also in “Ode on the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”: “The Windes with wonder whist, / Smoothly the waters kist” (lines 64–65).³⁰

These markings may therefore suggest multiple readings over time: if Bourne and Scott–Warren’s theories of the dating of the two inks and hands holds and the brackets are from the late 1630s, Milton is marking a passage he had already read some time earlier and remembered in 1629 when he wrote his Nativity ode. This may be true also of the later scoring of Ariel’s last song “Where the Bee sucks” (*Tempest* 5.1.88–94) with its crazily careening quintuple rhyme of “I/lie/crie/flie/merrily” that had appeared already in the wording and spirit of the Attendant Spirit’s final speech in the *Mask* with its (though more temperately quadruple) rhyme of “fly/lie/eye/sky” (lines 976–79).³¹

While these phrases seem to have impressed the young Milton, some brackets also highlight passages that resound in Milton’s later works, written long after he could have read Shakespeare or indeed anyone on his own. So, for example, the markings of Antigonus’s dream of the appearance and then vanishing of the spirit of Hermione who had recently given birth in *The Winter’s Tale* (3.3.15–58) seems to anticipate the scene in Sonnet 23, a poem I will return to later. In *Troilus and Cressida* Milton brackets the debate between the two lovers as they part. Here Troilus, who fears that Cressida is courting an unnecessary and dangerous trial of their love, makes an argument similar to that of Milton’s Adam: “In this I doe not

call your faith in question / So mainly as my merit," and "There lurkes a still and dumb-discoursiue diuell, / That tempts most cunningly: but be not tempted" (4.4.84–85; 90–91; compare with *Paradise Lost* 9.293–317, 364–66).

There are also some dominant patterns in Milton's markings that are evident even on a first glance. As Scott-Warren notes at the end of an online talk that he and Claire Bourne gave in 2021, Milton throughout the folio seems to follow references to the measurement of time, as well as descriptions of time, in particular the transition between times of day and year.³²

Such bracketings are especially evident in three heavily marked up plays, which are centrally concerned with time and timing: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and, above all, *Romeo and Juliet*. The brackets here suggest two separate but related concerns. The first is more technical, as Milton appears to be studying ways of handling the passing of time, often using personification. The larger concern seems more broadly thematic. Many critics have noted how the question of time and timing dominates Milton's early works.³³ The 1645 *Poems* includes various pieces on the liturgical calendar as well as poems that draw attention to the shaping and experience of time. While Milton believed that being a great poet takes time, he was also anxious to display his talent and noted with some alarm his slowness and tendency to procrastinate. So in the early Sonnet 7 "How soon hath Time" he worried that he had nothing to show yet for all his work: "my late spring no bud or blossome shew'th" (line 4). He also wrote a significant number of poems on the theme of untimely death—"On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough," *Lycidas*, "An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester," and *Epitaphium Damonis*. Although early deaths were common and such elegies expected of an apprentice poet, this strikingly lugubrious cluster of works seems to reflect a concern that by delaying he risks having his career end before it has begun.

The anxiety about how to use time also governs Milton's careful reading of *Romeo and Juliet*, a play that is itself about untimely death. Milton seems particularly alert to passages concerned with the *speed* at which the lovers' relationship develops. He brackets places where characters fear that things are happening too soon. At the opening, Juliet's father says that she is not yet ready for marriage:

Shee hath not seene the change of fourteene yeares,
 Let two more Summers wither in their pride,
 Ere we may thinke her ripe to be a Bride. (1.2.9–11)

In Act 2, Juliet herself worries about the speed of the lovers' passion, and hopes that they can slow down:

I haue no ioy of this contract to night,
 It is too rash, too vnaduis'd, too sudden,
 Too like the lightning which doth cease to be
 Ere, one can say, it lightens, Sweete good night:
 This bud of Loue by Summers ripening breath,
 May proue a beautious Flower when next we meete. (2.2.117–22)

The comparison of the lovers to plants that need to ripen slowly, according to the natural rhythm of the seasons, climaxes when overturned in Juliet's father's description of the apparently dead girl: "Death lies on her like an vntimely frost / Vpon the sweetest flower of all the field" (4.5.28–29). The flower nipped in the bud is of course a conventional image of premature death that appears all over Elizabethan poetry. Milton himself had used it in his earliest surviving English poem, "On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough," a work with noted echoes of Shakespeare and pseudo-Shakespearean writing, in which also the newly "blown" infant is "blasted" by frost in the form of a personified winter.³⁴ In *Romeo and Juliet* the Friar also fears that the lovers are moving too quickly and that things will end badly for them:

These violent delights haue violent endes,
 And in their triumph: die like fire and powder;
 Which as they kisse consume. The sweetest honey
 Is loathsome in his owne deliciousnesse,
 And in the taste confounds the appetite.
 Therefore Loue moderately, long Loue doth so,
 Too swift arriues as tardie as too slow. (2.6. 9–15)

Bracketing these lines, Milton seems sensitive to the fact that timing is askew in the play: Romeo arrives at the tomb *too soon* while the Friar and nurse arrive *too late*. Milton also notes the passage where Juliet complains that the nurse returns too slowly:

Oh she is lame,
 Loues Herauld should be thoughts,
 Which ten times faster glides then the Sunnes beames,

Driuing backe shadowes ouer lowring hils.
 Therefore do nimble Pinion'd Doues draw Loue,
 And therefore hath the wind-swift *Cupid* wings:
 Now is the Sun vpon the highmost hill
 Of this daies iourney, and from nine till twelue,
 I three long houres, yet she is not come.³⁵ (2.5.4–11)

As this passage suggests, Milton seems attentive to the different experiences of time that frame the play. The very first marking that he wrote in *Romeo and Juliet*, after the added and then bracketed prologue, is Benvolio's description of meeting the lovesick Romeo at dawn (1.1.118–23). The final passage that he marked is the description of the darker dawn that ends the play: "A gloomy peace this morning with it brings, / The Sunne for sorrow will not shew his head" (5.3.305–06). Milton also notes and corrects the description of dawn immediately following the balcony scene, which in the folio was given first to Romeo at the end of the lovers' parting and then repeated again at the opening of the next scene. It reads, corrected:

Fri. The gray ey'd morne smiles on the frowning night,
 Checkring the Easterne Cloudes with streaks of light:
 And fleckled darknesse like a drunkard reeles,
 From forth daies path, and *Titans* burning wheelles:
 Now ere the Sun aduance his burning eye,
 The day to cheere, and nights danke dew to dry,
 I must vpfill this Osier Cage of ours. (2.3.1–7)

As well as not making any sense, the folio's attribution of the lines to Romeo in the previous scene turns a night encounter into one at dawn. In correcting the passage, Milton draws a line between night and day, emphasizing a distinction that is crucial to the play.³⁶

As a whole, the tragedy seems read through the relation between day and night. A conflict between the two times is at the heart of the most famous dawn in the play (and perhaps all literature) and the debate between Romeo and Juliet over whether it is day or night:

Iul. Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet neere day:
 It was the Nightingale, and not the Larke,
 That pier'st the fearefull hollow of thine eare,
 Nightly she sings on yond Pomgranet tree,

Beleeue me Loue, it was the Nightingale.

Rom. It was the Larke the Herauld of the Morne:
No Nightingale: looke Loue what enuious streakes
Do lace the seuering Cloudes in yonder East:
Nights Candles are burnt out, and Iocond day
Stands tipto on the mistie Mountaines tops,
I must be gone and liue, or stay and die.

Iul. Yond light is not daylight, I know it I:
It is some Meteor that the Sun exhales,
To be to thee this night a Torch-bearer,
And light thee on thy way to *Mantua*.
Therefore stay yet, thou need'st not to be gone.

Rom. Let me be tane, let me be put to death,
I am content, so thou wilt haue it so.
Ile say yon gray is not the mornings eye,
'Tis but the pale reflexe of *Cinthias* brow.
Nor that is not Larke whose noates do beate
The vaulty heauen so high about our heads,
I haue more care to stay, then will to go:
Come death and welcome, *Iuliet* wills it so.
How ist my soule, lets talke, it is not day.

Iuli. It is, it is, hie hence be gone away:
It is the Larke that sings so out of tune,
Straining harsh Discords, and vnpleasing Sharpes.
Some say the Larke makes sweete Diuision;
This doth not so: for she diuideth vs.
Some say, the Larke and loathed Toad change eyes,
O now I would they had chang'd voyces too:
Since arme from arme that voyce doth vs affray,
Hunting thee hence, with Hunts-vp to the day,
O now be gone, more light and it light growes.

Rom. More light & light, more darke & darke our woes. (3.5.1–36)

Like the folio editors' confusion at the end of 2.2 and start of 2.3, the lovers' morning debate makes the two twilight times difficult to distinguish. For a brief moment, day and night seem the same. Yet the lovers realize that the times are radically opposed. Here, as in other works, Shakespeare tells the time through the difference between birds: the morning lark vs. the nightingale (or owl or raven), a traditional antithesis that Milton also draws on in

L'Allegro (line 41), *Il Penseroso* (line 56), and *Paradise Lost* (4.602–03, 648, 655, 771; 5.40). For Juliet, the lark's song with its "sweete Diuision" (3.5.29) shows ominously how day bitterly divides and ultimately destroys the lovers. In contrast, night is traditionally the time for love. Romeo identifies Juliet with night when he first sees her and instantly falls in love:

O she doth teach the Torchés to burne bright:
It seemes she hangs vpon the cheeke of night,
As a rich Iewel in an AETHiops eare. (1.6.44–46)

The lovers meet, court, consummate their love, and are united in death at night. Longing to see her lover, Juliet thus tries to speed up time to bring on the night more quickly:

Gallop apace, you fiery footed steedes,
Towards *Phoebus* lodging, such a Wagoner
As *Phaeton* would whip you to the west,
[And] bring in Cloudie night immediately.
Spred thy close Curtaine Loue-performing night,
That run-awayes eyes may wincke, and *Romeo*
Leape to these armes, vntalkt of and vnseene,
Louers can see to doe their Amorous rights,
[And] by their owne Beauties: or if Loue be blind,
It best agrees with night: come ciuill night,
Thou sober suted Matron all in blacke,
And learne me how to loose a winning match,
Plaid for a paire of stainlesse Maidenhoods,
Hood my vnman'd blood bayting in my Cheekes,
With thy Blacke mantle, till strange Loue grow bold,
Thinke true Loue acted simple modestie:
Come night, come *Romeo*, come thou day in night,
For thou wilt lie vpon the wings of night
Whiter then [new] Snow vp[up]on a Rauens backe:
Come gentle night, come louing blackebrow'd night.
Giue me my *Romeo*, and when I [he] shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little starres,
And he will make the Face of heauen so fine,
That all the world will be in Loue with night,
And pay no worship to the Garish Sun.

O I haue bought the Mansion of a Loue,
 Not yet enjoy'd, so tedious is this day,
 As is the night before some Festiuall. (3.2.1–29, with Milton's
 changes)

For these passionate lovers, day is the deadly enemy of life and love. As Juliet says, “Then window let day in, and let life out” (3.5.41).

An opposition and competition between night and day was the subject of Milton's academic exercise written and delivered at Cambridge University on the subject “Whether Day or Night is the More Excellent.” A school assignment, the rhetorical exercise cannot be read as an expression of Milton's deep-seated belief about the two times—which is a good thing, as asserting the moral superiority of one time over another seems somewhat strange. But nothing Milton ever does goes to waste, and the argument he makes there, contrasting the two times and thinking about their relation, sticks with him throughout his later works. Asked to formally defend the superiority of day, Milton drew on readily available associations of light and darkness to make the two the fundamentally opposed moral principles of good and evil. Night, which has presumptuously declared war on day, “springs from Hell” and is the mother of all evils in the world, including death. Day, in contrast, “is the eldest daughter of Heaven” and source of all goodness and life (YP 1:230, 226).

But freed from the dualistic demands of the prolusion structure, Milton's other writings depict the relationship between the two as more complicated and flexible and not always antagonistic. His early works experiment with different ways of imagining night. The darkness of night causes the children in the *Mask* to get lost; for the Lady it is “theevish Night” (line 195). In “In quintum Novembris,” it is the time when Satan visits his paramour, the Pope. This is partly because night is the time of love, as *Romeo and Juliet* shows, and Comus more sinisterly insinuates, “What hath night to do with sleep” (line 122)? In *Elegy 7*, the lovestruck speaker therefore responds like Romeo to the light of day: “At mihi adhuc refugam quaerebant lumina noctem / Nec matutinum sustinere jubar” (“But my eyes still looked for the fleeing night / And could not bear the morning radiance,” lines 15–16). Yet above all, night is also the time for poetic inspiration in the third and especially fifth elegies; in the latter, “mihi Pyrenen somnia nocte ferunt” (“dreams bring Pirene to me nightly,” line 10). In “Mansus,” too, Milton notes how he has heard swans, birds of poetry, singing on the Thames at night (lines 30–31).

Paradise Lost shows these two sides of night. The sinister Night of Prolusion 1 reappears in book 2 as a personified figure, the silent partner of Chaos who gives Satan directions to Earth. In contrast, in books 4–9 night is a purely temporal measurement and part of the natural cycles of Edenic and heavenly life. Adam and Eve and the angels do not need to choose between day *or* night but enjoy day *and* night as both are created by God.³⁷ In the prelapsarian world the fall of night is part of a natural rhythm celebrated at the end of book 4 and in the great hymn in book 5. Here Adam and Eve describe the natural pattern of the universe as one of falling and rising by which everything emanates from and returns to God. With the Fall, however, night also falls (in one of the best examples of Milton's play on different forms of falling). As Paul Hammond notes, "Night, which before the Fall had been a time when the couple wondered at the beauty of nature, praised the Creator, and celebrated their love in guiltless sex, has now become for Adam a sign of the evil which he has wrought, and a source of unknown terrors."³⁸ Yet even after the Fall, night retains its higher power, as it is the time when Milton's Muse comes to him. And in Sonnet 23, the early opposition between night and day is recalled but reversed as the vision of Milton's late wife coming back to life ends sadly when "day brought back my night" (line 14).

The inversion in Milton's sonnet is anticipated in *Il Penseroso*, which also offers a counterargument to the first Prolusion by making night and darkness a time of contemplation and vision that leads to the transcendence of the merely earthly.³⁹ Editors have long noted the echoes of Juliet's cry for nightfall in this poem: her "blackbrow'd night" (3.2.20) reappears in *Il Penseroso* as "the rugged brow of night" (line 58); and "come ciuill night, / Thou sober suted Matron all in blacke" (3.2.10–11) becomes Milton's "civil-suited Morn" (line 122).⁴⁰ The "Garish Sun" (3.2.25) turns into Milton's "Day's garish eie" (line 141). There are further parallels. Although Shakespeare's play begins with a description of dawn, we learn that Romeo tends to prow around all night and retreat as day breaks. His father complains that

Many a morning hath he there beene seene,
 With teares augmenting the fresh mornings dew,
 Adding to cloudes, more cloudes with his deepe sighes,
 But all so soone as the all-cheering Sunne,
 Should in the farthest East begin to draw

The shadie Curtaines from *Auroras* bed,
 Away from light steales home my heavy Sonne,
 And priuate in his Chamber pennes himselfe,
 Shuts vp his windowes, lockes faire day-light out,
 And makes himselfe an artificiall night:
 Blacke and portendous must this humour proue,
 Vnlesse good counsell may the cause remoue. (I.I.131-42)

For Romeo's father such behavior is unnatural, as it is out of tune with the cycles: his *heavy* Sonne (with an *o*, line 137) is the *enemy* of the all-cheering Sunne (with a *u*, line 134). Milton, however, may have appreciated the opposition here between two types of son/suns, which he uses to explore the tension between the natural and the divine sun/Son in the Nativity ode and elsewhere. But, the day-spurning Romeo seems related to *Il Penseroso*, who seeks to "Hide me from Day's garish eie" (line 141) and replaces natural light first with a fire that can "Teach light to counterfeit a gloom" (line 80) and ultimately with the vision of heaven itself (line 166).

While for Shakespeare night is the time of love, it is equally the time of the imagination and dreams, rhapsodically celebrated in Mercutio's glorious vision of the dream world of Queen Mab (1.4.53-91), which Milton marks in the folio with surging waves of brackets. Romeo tells his friend that dreamers "do dreame things true" (line 52), as he later hopes his dream of Juliet kissing him back to life may "presage some ioyfull news at hand" (5.1.1-3). But both he and Mercutio question the reality of the imaginative world. Romeo tries to control Mercutio's long flight of fancy by bringing him back to earth:

Rom. Peace, peace, *Mercutio* peace,
 Thou talk'st of nothing.
Mer. True, I talke of dreames:
Which are the children of an idle braine,
Begot of nothing, but vaine phantasie,
Which is as thin of substance as the ayre. (lines 95-99, emphasis added)

Benvolio, who from the start belongs to the day world, breaks in with the voice of day and common sense, warning his friends that they are dreaming their lives away: "This wind you talke of blowes vs from our selues, / Supper is done, and we shall come too late" (lines 104-05); Romeo soberly replies,

"I fear too early" (line 106). The time seems indeed out of joint in this inverted world in which night is the lovers' day. Parting from Juliet at the balcony, Romeo therefore worries, "O blessed blessed night, I am afraid / Being in night, all this is but a dreame, / Too flattering sweet to be substantial" (2.2.139–41). As in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the play asks us what kind of truth dreams tell.⁴¹

In a letter to a friend probably written in 1633, Milton defended himself against the claim that he had "given up my selfe to dreame away my Yeares in the armes of studious retirement like Endymion wth the Moone" (YP 1:319). Yet he also notes that he is "something suspicion[us] of my selfe, & doe take notice of a certaine belatedness in me" (YP 1:320): he worries that he may be too late. His art was "slow-endeavouring" ("On Shakespeare," line 9) in comparison to the prolific poet who seemed to pour forth plays and poetry effortlessly. Milton took time to write and publish his early poetry. Though Harold Bloom famously excluded Milton from feeling the anxiety of influence—if only to make him its source—it seems hard to imagine that coming so soon *after* such a seemingly natural writer was not intimidating and made him feel he had come too late in another sense to English literature.⁴² Shakespeare had done it all! But in *L'Allegro* Milton's famous invocation of Shakespeare as "sweetest *Shakespear* fancies childe" (line 133) places Shakespeare in a dream world conjured up by the poetic imagination where "youthfull Poets dream / On Summer eeves by haunted stream" (lines 129–30). The opening of *Il Penseroso* seems to dismiss such imaginings as fanciful nothings from an idle brain:

Hence vain deluding joyes,
 The brood of folly without father bred,
 How little you bested,
 Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys;
 Dwell in som idle brain,
 And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
 As thick and numberless
 As the gay motes that people the Sun Beams,
 Or likest hovering dreams
 The fickle Pensioners of Morpheus train. (lines 1–10)

The language and concepts here recall broadly Mercutio's claims that his fantasy is "the children of an idle braine, / Begot of nothing, but vaine phantasie, / Which is as thin of substance as the ayre" (1.4.97–99).

Milton's banishing of the products of some "idle brain" here might appear to confirm Guillory's claim that as Milton develops, he leaves Shakespeare behind in the escapist dream world of the imagination of *L'Allegro*. In Guillory's reading, Shakespeare dominates *L'Allegro*, associated with the world of dreamy fancy, while the inspired prophet Spenser guides *Il Penseroso*.⁴³ But studying the folio encourages us to pay attention to Shakespeare's even more forceful presence in *Il Penseroso*, a poem which ends with two dream visions. *Paradise Lost* is full of dreams, and so is *Paradise Regain'd*; the only non-dreamy major Miltonic character is Samson, and I am not sure that is in his favor. When we think of dreams in Milton, we mostly remember Eve's sinister dream which ends with a fall. But that is simply when Eve "fell asleep" (5.92). "Falling" asleep might be a safe and indeed creative form of falling upward. Dreams can also lead to a higher reality: in Adam's dream he awakens and finds it true (8.309–11).⁴⁴ Milton's markings in the folio suggest that he saw Shakespeare as a practicing author to be studied as closely as classical writers. As a "son of memory" ("On Shakespeare," 5), he could be a new muse who could inspire rather than inhibit those coming after. It may have suited Milton well to create the impression in "On Shakespeare" that Shakespeare's greatness was creatively stifling—"thou our fancy of it self bereaving / Dost make us Marble with too much conceiving" (lines 13–14)—just as it suited him in *Ad Patrem* to represent his father as unhappy about his son's choice of a poetic career. Presenting both poetic and biological fathers as impediments makes Milton's achievement in spite of them seem even greater. It also allowed the son and poet to define himself as clearly different from his progenitors (perhaps important for a man who shared his father's name). If we abandon the myth that Milton rejected Shakespeare, however, we may be able to start seeing more clearly how he transformed him as imaginatively as Ovid had Virgil. The evidence from the folio suggests a young writer studying his model carefully and creatively, while the early poems show the remarkable transmutation of this study into something rich and strange, a new kind of poetry. In terms of the specific pattern I have been tracing, we obviously do not know whether reading Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* set Milton thinking about time or whether his own preoccupation with time meant he read the play in a certain way. Milton himself may not have known either: it is impossible to disentangle the sources of our own ideas. The difference between the two writers may seem as clear as night and day, but, as both remind us, that is not always that clear after all.

NOTES

1. See the unfolding detective story in Claire M. L. Bourne, "Vide Supplementum: Early Modern Collation as Play-Reading in the First Folio," in *Early Modern English Marginalia*, ed. Katherine Acheson (New York, 2019), 195–233; and Jason Scott-Warren, "Milton's Shakespeare?," *CMT Blog*, Centre for Material Texts, September 9, 2019, <https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cmt/?p=5751>. The story will be fleshed out further in Claire M. L. Bourne and Jason Scott-Warren, "'Thy unvalued Booke': John Milton's Copy of the Shakespeare First Folio," *Milton Quarterly* (forthcoming, 2022).

2. See Scott-Warren, "Milton's Shakespeare?"; also Alison Flood, "When Milton Met Shakespeare: Poet's Notes on the Bard Seem to Have Been Found," *Guardian*, September 16, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/sep/16/when-milton-met-shakespeare-poets-notes-on-bard-appear-to-have-been-found>. Further analysis is needed, of course. I was fortunate to go for a few days before the COVID-19 pandemic and get a preliminary look at the book. There are some brackets, especially toward the end of the folio, that shoot out horizontally in very different patterns of marking and could belong to a different hand. To me these markings are too uncertain in origin and intent to be significant, so I have bracketed them from my own discussion.

3. See especially Bourne "Vide Supplementum," 203–06.

4. Bourne also shows many places where Milton seems to side, either consciously or unconsciously, with earlier quartos. The quartos of 1597, 1599, 1609, and 1622 all included the prologue.

5. William Poole, "John Milton and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Vita di Dante*," *Milton Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2014): 139–70. On the relation of Milton's reading practices to his intellectual life in the 1630s–40s, see also John Hale, "Milton's Euripides Marginalia: Their Significance for Milton Studies," in *Milton as Multilingual: Selected Essays 1982–2004*, ed. Lisa Marr and Chris Ackerley, introd. Beverley Sherry (Otago, 2005), 103–15.

6. Poole, "John Milton," 149.

7. *Ibid.*, 160.

8. *Ibid.*, 150–54.

9. Scott-Warren, "Milton's Shakespeare?"

10. Terence H. Howard-Hill, "Milton and 'Rounded Theatre's Pomp,'" in *Of Poetry and Politics: New Essays on Milton and His World*, ed. P. G. Stanwood (Binghamton, N.Y., 1995), 95–120. Howard-Hill generally subscribes to an older belief that Shakespeare was relatively neglected in the seventeenth century. But there is increasing evidence that he was widely read; see David Frost, "Shakespeare in the Seventeenth Century," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1965): 81–89. As Frost argues, the emphasis on memorization and imitation in the schools made it likely that "his contemporaries knew some at least of Shakespeare's work even more accurately than we"; as he reminds us, "The Elizabethans and Jacobean were magpies for a phrase" (87). Recently, Daniel Blank has made a convincing argument for Shakespeare's presence even in the classically oriented universities; see Blank, "'Our Fellow Shakespeare': A Contemporary Classic in the Early Modern University," *Review of English Studies*, new series, 71, no. 301 (2020): 652–69.

11. All citations from Milton's early poetry are from *John Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. Stella Revard, trans. Lawrence Revard (Malden, Mass., 2009). John Carey also notes the strong echoes of Shakespeare in *L'Allegro*; see Carey, ed., *Milton: The Complete Shorter Poems*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, 2007), 131.

12. Samuel Taylor Coleridge also famously made them two contrasting types of authorial identity: Milton is the poet of egotism, while Shakespeare is the self-effacing chameleon; see Coleridge's comments in Joseph Wittreich, ed., *The Romantics on Milton: Formal Essays and Critical Asides* (Cleveland, 1970), esp. 199, 270. William Hazlitt suggested further that the opposition reflects an essential distinction between drama, which demands a protean sensibility, and epic, the genre of empire, which requires stability and fixity of character (Wittreich, *Romantics*, 393–94). Elsewhere, however, Coleridge offered a more nuanced portrait of Shakespeare: “no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it; [he] first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge, become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class; to that power which seated him on one of the two glory-smitten summits of the poetic mountain, with Milton as his compeer, not rival” (Wittreich, *Romantics*, 222). This Shakespeare indeed sounds less like *L'Allegro* than like *Il Penseroso*, whose “old experience do obtain / To something like prophetic strain” (lines 173–74). It is refreshing to see the two writers together here, sharing twin peaks on a single mountain.

13. John Middleton Murry, *The Problem of Style* (London and New York, 1922), 109. In *Heaven—and Earth* (London, 1938), Murry fumed over Milton's bad influence in contrast to that of Shakespeare: “Shakespeare baffles and liberates; Milton is perspicuous and constricts” (158). Apparently, Murry took literally John Keats's comment on Milton, “Life to him would be death to me.” See “From Letter 199. To the George Keatses,” in Wittreich, *Romantics*, 562; see also Murry's *Keats and Shakespeare: A Study of Keats' Poetic Life from 1816 to 1820* (Oxford, 1925), 215. The nonsensical idea that Milton stifled creativity was unfortunately picked up and popularized by Harold Bloom, who made Milton the source of the “anxiety of influence”: his Milton is the “great Inhibitor, the Sphinx who strangles even strong imaginations in their cradles.” See *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York, 1973), 32. This myth was entrenched further by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, 1979).

14. So in his otherwise sensitive study, Patrick Cruttwell makes the two authors stand for antithetical poetics that divide English poetry: Milton epitomizes an antitheatrical sensibility that kills dramatic Elizabethan poetry, and so sadly ends what Cruttwell calls “the Shakespearean Moment.” See *The Shakespearean Moment and Its Place in the Poetry of the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1960), 214. Even the astute A. D. Nuttall is seduced into this invidious cliché; his discussion of *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven, 2007) opens and closes with a contrast between a Shakespeare who opens up questions and a Milton who closes them off (1, 381).

15. On this practice, which goes back to using Hesiod and Homer as two kinds of poets, see Philip Hardie, "Contrasts," in *Classical Constructions: Papers in Memory of Don Fowler, Classicist and Epicurean*, ed. S. J. Heyworth et al. (Oxford, 2007), 141–73.

16. See F. R. Leavis, "Milton's Verse," in *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (London, 1936), 42–60. Rather alarmingly, Leavis makes the reader take sides: no one who likes Milton can possibly read Shakespeare (60, 54). G. Wilson Knight also argued that Milton's presumed turn away from Shakespeare was deadening for him and for the development of English poetry: "a denial of the specifically vital with a corresponding emphasis on the mechanical." See *The Burning Oracle: Studies in the Poetry of Action* (London, 1939), 74. Behind all of these attacks lurks T. S. Eliot's identification of Milton with the "dissociation of sensibility," the polarization of thought and feeling in the seventeenth century that, according to Eliot, led to the poetic and cultural crisis of the early twentieth century; see "The Metaphysical Poets," in Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York, 1932), 241–50 (247). See also the discussion of this line of criticism in John Leonard, *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of "Paradise Lost," 1667–1970*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2013), 1:174–79.

17. See Leslie Brisman, *Milton's Poetry of Choice and Its Romantic Heirs* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1973); Maureen Quilligan, *Milton's Spenser: The Politics of Reading* (Ithaca N.Y., 1983); and John Guillory, *Poetic Authority: Spenser, Milton and Literary History* (New York, 1983). As Paul Stevens notes, this story goes back to Warton and then Coleridge; see *Imagination and the Presence of Shakespeare in "Paradise Lost"* (Madison, Wisc., 1985), 3.

18. See John Dryden, *Of Dramatic Poesy, and Other Critical Essays*, 2 vols., ed. George Watson (London, 1962), 2:270–71. Dryden's assertion has meant, as Guillory notes in *Poetic Authority*, that "one major line of continuity in literary history descends from Spenser and Milton while Shakespeare dwells apart, inimitable on his poetic Olympus" (22). It is a different story from that suggested by Coleridge's mountain "compeers" (see above n. 12).

19. According to Guillory's highly influential account in *Poetic Authority*, "Spenser becomes the source of the counteractive magic, 'reversing' the continued and attractive temptation to regress into the Shakespearean plenitude" (90). So Guillory suggests that "Milton propagates the myth of a natural, innocent Shakespeare, warbling his native woodnotes wild, in order to dissociate himself from that figure" (19).

20. See *Eikonoklastes* in *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols., ed. Don M. Wolfe et al. (New Haven, 1953–82), 3:361. Unless otherwise noted, further quotations from Milton's prose are from this edition, hereafter cited as YP. David Masson first raised the possibility that Milton rejected Shakespeare not only for poetical and moral reasons but on political grounds; see Masson, *The Life of John Milton*, 6 vols. (London, 1859–80), 3:515. It has been revived more recently by Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640–1660* (New Haven, 1994), 16–17; and Smith, *Is Milton Better than Shakespeare?* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008), 92–94. For more nuanced recent interpretations, see Martin Dzelzainis, "Milton, Macbeth, and Buchanan," *Seventeenth Century* 4, no. 1 (1989): 55–66, esp. 57–58; Nicholas McDowell, "The Nation's Poet?"

Milton's Shakespeare and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms," in *Celtic Shakespeare: The Bard and the Borderers*, ed. Willy Maley and Rory Loughnane (Burlington, 2013), 205–16.

21. See Alwin Thaler, "Shakespearean Recollection in Milton: A Summing-Up," in *Shakespeare and Our World* (Knoxville, 1966), 139–227 (223). See also his earlier studies: R. D. Havens and Alwin Thaler, "Milton in the Theatre," *Studies in Philology* 17, no. 3 (1920): 269–308; Thaler, *Shakespeare's Silences* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), 97–256; and Thaler, "Shakespeare and Milton Once More," in *SAMLA Studies in Milton*, ed. J. Max Patrick (Gainesville, 1953), 80–99. See also Rachel Trickett, "Shakespeare and Milton," *Essays and Studies* 31 (1978): 23–35; and especially Paul Stevens, *Imagination and the Presence of Shakespeare*. The approaches of these critics are different, reflecting their own critical moments. Thaler tries scrupulously to distinguish true "Shakespearean recollection" from "illustrations of current Elizabethan idioms" (*Shakespeare and Our World*, 142–43) but still at times seems unavoidably impressionistic; if not entirely successful, or complete in its range, his work is a helpful start. Trickett's insightful but sadly unappreciated essay more broadly considers "what one poetic imagination can derive from another in the most unlikely context" to gain "a greater awareness of the way in which the creative imagination operates" ("Shakespeare and Milton," 35). Partly responding to Guillory, Stevens sees Milton's Shakespeare as a redeemed imagination that is "the peculiar instrument of grace" (*Imagination and the Presence of Shakespeare*, 5). He argues that Shakespeare is invoked by Milton primarily at moments when he meditates on the power of the imagination; Stevens focusses, therefore, on the impact of *The Tempest*, a play marked significantly in the folio, and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is much less so. While to date Stevens's book remains the most detailed and careful study of the relation between the two writers, the folio markings suggest that Milton had an even more expansive and also less abstract engagement with Shakespeare's works, often at the level of imagery, language, and character development.

22. Scott-Warren, "Milton's Shakespeare?"

23. Milton does note, however, the description of Cleopatra on her barge in *Antony and Cleopatra* (2.2.190–218) to which scholars have sometimes compared the nautical description of Dalila in *Samson Agonistes*, lines 710–24.

24. On the presence of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Milton's works, see Stevens, *Imagination and the Presence of Shakespeare*. The last marking of the play is the disappointingly unimaginative, if accurate, correction of "say" to "saw."

25. Hale, "Milton's Euripides," 113.

26. Bourne is intrigued by the independent reader who does not always follow the 1637 quartos; see "*Vide Supplementum*," 217–18.

27. Textual citations of Shakespeare are taken from Milton's copy of the First Folio in the Philadelphia Free Library, which now may be consulted online at <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/feature/first-folio>. The edition lacks line numbers and in some cases act-scene divisions; I have oriented the quotations using *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, 1974).

28. See, for example, Carey, ed., *Complete Shorter Poems*, 181.

29. Quotations from the version of *Lycidas* in the Trinity manuscript are from Barbara Keifer Lewalski and Estelle Haan, eds., *The Shorter Poems*, vol. 3 of *The Complete Works of John Milton* (Oxford, 2014, corrected version), 533. On the significance of the revision, see Carey, ed., *Complete Shorter Poems*, 250. Always picky about flowers, Milton also brackets the bouquet with another “Pale-Primrose” that is strewn at the burial of Imogen/Fidele in *Cymbeline* (4.2.218–29).

30. As noted in, among other places, *The Minor English Poems*, vol. 2 of *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton*, ed. A. S. P. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush (New York, 1972), 1, 75.

31. The five different surviving versions of the *Mask* all highlight this rhyme but show Milton's uncertainty about where he wanted it to appear. He tried it at opposing but equally important positions at the ends of the work: in the Bridgewater manuscript the rhyme is part of the opening speech that describes the Attendant Spirit's descent to Earth, but it instead marks the spirit's reascent at the close of the revised Trinity manuscript, 1637 quarto, and the 1645 and 1673 *Poems*.

32. Scott-Warren and Bourne, “Re-Reading Milton, Re-reading Shakespeare,” 10th Annual Milton Lecture, Milton's Cottage, February 4, 2021.

33. See especially Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 444–93; and Maggie Kilgour, *Milton and the Metamorphosis of Ovid* (Oxford, 2012), 139–49.

34. Critics have long noted echoes of the pseudo-Shakespearean “Passionate Pilgrim 10” in the opening line, and then of *Venus and Adonis* in lines 6–7; see, for example, Carey, ed., *Complete Shorter Poems*, 15. For further connections with the Shakespearean subtext, see Kilgour, *Milton and the Metamorphosis*, 63–69.

35. Uncharacteristically, Milton misses the error—“I” for “Is”—in line 11.

36. In the markings of *Macbeth*, Milton seems interested in the unnatural confusion between night and day that occurs with the murder of Duncan. He brackets the fearful description from the Old Man and Rosse, which concludes:

byth' Clock 'tis Day,
And yet darke Night strangles the traailing Lampe:
Is't Nights predominance, or the Dayes shame,
That Darknesse does the face of Earth intombe,
When liuing Light should kisse it? (2.4.6–10)

See also 2.3.54–61.

37. See especially 4.610–14, 724–25; 6.4–12. Time in eternity is not the same as on Earth, however; night in Heaven is a kind of twilight zone of moderated darkness (5.642–46), while God himself is imagined as “Day without Night” (5.162).

38. David Hammond, *Milton's Complex Words: Essays on the Conceptual Structure of “Paradise Lost”* (Oxford, 2017), 124.

39. For a blind man, of course, the darkness of night might have a new meaning. Milton's defence of his blindness as vision might be seen in the same Christian mystical

tradition of inverting norms which appears in Henry Vaughan's "Night." Vaughan's poem concludes:

There is in God (some say)
A deep, but dazzling darkness; As men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
See not all clear;
O for that night! where I in him
Might live invisible and dim. (lines 49–54)

Cited from *Texts 1654–1678, Letters, and Medical Marginalia*, vol. 2 of *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. Donald R. Dickson, Alan Rudrum, and Robert Wilcher (Oxford, 2018), 611–12.

40. Milton also marked *Hamlet's* description of dawn appearing "in Russet mantle clad" (1.1.166). In his own works he has a tendency to imagine times of day as well-dressed; see, for example, the *Mask's* description of "the gray-hooded Eev'n / Like a sad Votarist in Palmers weed" (lines 188–90), and *Paradise Lost* where "Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray / Had in her sober Liverie all things clad" (4.598–99), cited from Barbara K. Lewalski, *John Milton: "Paradise Lost"* (Malden, Mass., 2007).

41. While I noted the somewhat surprising and disappointing lack of marking in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Milton brackets Hippolyta's first speech in which she draws attention to the passing of time and measures it by the moon:

Foure daies wil quickly steep thēselues in nights
Foure nights wil quickly dreame away the time:
And then the Moone, like to a siluer bow,
Now bent in heauen, shal behold the night
Of our solemnities (1.1.7–11)

42. Guillory suggests that the imagery of petrification in "On Shakespeare" reveals Milton's fear of Shakespeare's overwhelming moral as well as imaginative power; see *Poetic Authority*, 19. For Bloom, see *Anxiety of Influence*.

43. Guillory, *Poetic Authority*, 69–73.

44. Eve, of course, is also created in a dream. For Keats, Adam's creation manifests the power of the imagination: "The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream . . . he awoke and found it truth"; see "Letter 43. To Benjamin Bailey, November 22, 1817," in Wittreich, *Romantics*, 547.