

Lecture 12: Intro to Literature & the Environment, *Milton, Marvel, & Herbert (The end of the "Renaissance")*

A) John Martin, "Raphael visits Eden" (1825)

B) Milton's "Paradise Lost"

- 1) Like Cooper's Hill, Paradise Lost is highly descriptive of a locale, Eden:
A happy rural seat of various view:
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and
balm; Others whose fruit, burnished with golden
rind, Hung amiable—Hesperian fables true.
If true, here only—and of delicious taste.
Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Gracing the tender herb, were interposed,
Or palmy hillock; or the flowery lap
Of some irriguous valley spread her store,
Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose.
- 2) Paradise Lost must be highly descriptive of the locale, as you cannot visit Eden:
Paradise Lost is an excellent example of the power of loco-descriptive literature,
as it is wonderfully able to represent an environment (in this case, Eden), which
cannot be gestured to, as it does not exist. In this sense, Milton's epic can be
seen as a triumph of the local-descriptive approach.
- 3) Milton similarly lavishly describes Heaven and Hell in "Paradise Lost": Because
Milton is a monist, he imagines Heaven and Hell as not only made of the same
basic matter as Earth, but as strikingly similar in appearance, as these three
places are filled with plants, streams, mountains, and so forth.
- 4) In fact, Earth and Heaven are so similar that they could have one day merged:
In "Paradise Lost" Milton imagines that, if there had not been a Fall, Adam and
Eve would have brought about an extraordinary cosmic event: "And Earth be
chang'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth" (VII.160).

C) "Upon Appleton House" Andrew Marvel, 1652

- 1) Generally speaking, "Upon Appleton House" was the last "country-house" poem:
Although in the early 18th century Alexander Pope would describe the
countryside around his house in the poem "Windsor Forest," for the most part
country-estate poems ended with Upon Appleton House in 1652.

2) Although a country-estate poem, "Upon Appleton House" is highly descriptive: In its size alone (it is nearly 800 lines in length), Andrew Marvell's great countryestate poem makes clear that description is now far more important than it was in Jonson's "To Penshurst," which was one sixth its length. Thus, country-estate poetry is transitioning into loco-descriptive literature.

3) Nonetheless, "Upon Appleton House" is also highly allegorical: "Upon Appleton House" contains a tirade against the Catholic Church (Stanzas 1235), actually insinuating that Catholic nuns are lesbians, as well as metaphorically weighing in on England's Civil War (Stanzas 47-59)

4) "Upon Appleton House" expresses a number of perspectives on the environment:

For example, Marvell imagines his patron, General Thomas Fairfax, as overseeing his garden's plants as a general would an army:

When in the East the Morning Ray
Hangs out the Colours of the Day,
The Bee through these known Allies hums, Beating
the Dian with its Drumms.
Then Flow'rs their drowsie Eylids raise,
Their Silken Ensigns each displayes,
And dries its Pan yet dank with Dew,
And fills its Flask with Odours new.
These, as their Governour goes by, In
fragrant Vollyes they let fly.
(l. 289-98)

5) Marvell also draws attention to, and celebrates, Fairfax's old-growth forest:
But I, retiring from the Flood,
Take Sanctuary in the Wood;
And, while it lasts, my self imbarke
In this yet green, yet growing Ark; Where
the first Carpenter might best
Fit Timber for his Keel have Pressed.
And where all Creatures might have shares.
(481-87)

6) "Upon Appleton House" makes clear that environmental attitudes were in flux: Although celebrating the near-military control of a highly cultivated garden, Marvell is also well aware of the merits of wilderness, both for human beings and other life--an attitude moving toward ecocentrism.

1) The "Mower against Gardens" expresses an uneasiness toward modification of the environment. This attitude will continue to grow in the next 350 years:

2) Luxurious bring his vice in use,
Did after him the world seduce;
And from the fields the flow'rs and plants allure, Where
nature was most plain and pure.
He first enclos'd within the garden's square
A dead and standing pool of air;
And a more luscious earth for them did knead,
Which stupefied them while it fed. The pink
grew then as double as his mind; The
nutriment did change the kind.
With strange perfumes he did the roses taint, And
flow'rs themselves were taught to paint.

3) The tulip, white, did for complexion seek,
And learn'd to interline its cheek;
Its onion root they then so high did hold, That
one was for a meadow sold.
Another world was search'd, through oceans new, To
find the Marvel of Peru.
And yet these rarities might be allow'd,
To man, that sov'reign thing and proud; Had
he not dealt between the bark and tree,
Forbidden mixtures there to see.
No plant now knew the stock from which it came,
He grafts upon the wild the tame; That
the uncertain and adult'rate fruit Might
put the palate in dispute.

E) "Man" George Herbert, 1633

1) Like Marvell, George Herbert was anxious about the loss of indigenous plants:

2) More servants wait on Man,
Then he'l take notice of: in ev'ry path He
treads down that which doth befriend him,
When sicknesse makes him pale and wan.
Oh mightie love!

Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they finde
their acquaintance there.