Taboo and Transgression in British Literature from the Renaissance to the Present

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THE TABOO OF REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT AFTER 1660 AND STRATEGIES OF SUBVERSION IN MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST* AND BUNYAN'S *THE HOLY WAR*

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The Restoration, Censorship, and the Submerged Tradition of Radicalism

In a period rich in paradoxical situations, surprising connections and unexpected alliances, it is one of the supreme if subtle ironies to find the much-hated chief censor, royalist pamphleteer and persecutor of nonconformists, Sir Roger L'Estrange (1616–1704), on the printed list of subscribers to the fourth edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost* in 1688 (cf. Parker 1: 662f.). Focusing on Milton and Bunyan as the crucial figures in late-seventeenth-century religious and political dissent, this essay will explore the intricate interplay between political taboos, censorship, and subversive literary strategies in the period after 1660.[1] This context calls for a specific reconceptualization of the notion of "taboo" as not so much a ban on forbidden and socially repressed acts or practices—incest, cannibalism, certain sexual practices, irreligious behavior—that violate societal and individual norms of decency and acceptability. Rather, this essay studies what can quite literally be viewed as a ban on thought, a form of suppressing a set of political ideas and their utterance by means of censorship and other forms of political and legal repression.

The unique subversive strategies of political writing in this period can only be understood in the context of the political climate and

the legal situation in the years after 1660. As David Ogg observed in his classic study *England in the Reign of Charles II*, Charles's return in May 1660 appears to have occurred "on the crest of a great wave," triumphantly sweeping away "every vestige of republicanism or political experiment" (1: 139).[2] But as Christopher Hill and others have shown, a tradition of radical republicanism survived despite wide-spread enthusiasm for the Restoration (cf. 1976, 10–15 *et passim*).[3] Such radical thinking, however, was forced underground by the 'Clarendon Code', the umbrella term given to restrictive post-Restoration legislation such as the *Corporation Act* (1661), the *Act for the Preservation of the King* (1661), the *Act of Uniformity* (1662) or the *Conventicle Act* (1664). Thus, while the overtly millenarian enthusiasm of the 1640s and early 1650s had already been considerably dampened by the Protectorate, the vigorous pamphlet wars and the free expression of largely republican radical political thought came to end in the years after 1660 with the new licensing and censorship regulations enforced especially by the notorious *Licensing Act*. This *Act for Preventing the Frequent Abuses in Printing Seditious, Treasonable and Unlicensed Books and Pamphlets, and for Regulating of Printing and Printing Presses*, as it was officially titled, came into effect in June 1662 and lapsed in 1679, only to be renewed in 1685 (cf. Keeble 96ff.). Even more explicitly, the 1661 *Act for the Preservation of the King* drew attention to the connection between republican thought, subversive writing and danger to the monarchy by declaring the regicide of 1649 and the ensuing Commonwealth period to have been the direct consequence of subversive writing: "the late troubles and disorders did in a very great measure proceed from the multitude of seditious sermons, pamphlets and speeches daily preached, printed and published." Henceforth, it was to be considered an act of treason to "incite or stir up the people to hatred or dislike of the person of his Majesty or the established government" (Rpt. in Browning 63, 65). The laws against religious nonconformity and political radicalism as well as the repressive measures against dissenting writers and printers frequently proceeded from the assumption, as Lord Halifax was to write in 1687, that "it is impossible for a dissenter not to be a rebel" (Keeble 29). In this vein, research on the period, for instance Greaves's excellent book on the broad tradition of radicalism and nonconformism between 1664 and 1677, has shown that religious nonconformism and political radicalism cannot be studied in isolation from one another.

In addition to repressive legislation, there was virtually a discursive taboo on republican thought after the traumatic experience of two decades of civil war, military dictatorship and political chaos. Throughout the Restoration, "[s]corched historical memories" (Harris 2001, 252) of the 1640s and 1650s were used roundly to discredit republican thought. Thus, during the exclusion crisis of 1679–1681[4], it was a central Tory strategy to compare the Whigs to the Presbyterians and Independents of the early 1640s and to insist on the regicide and Cromwell's dictatorial government as direct consequences of such rebellious behavior, in other words constantly to invoke the threat of yet another civil war in order to silence political dissent. With insistent references to the events of the 1640s and 1650s, the Whigs were thus branded as "nonconformists, factious, king killers, mob rousers, tyrants, and hostile to the Church of England" (Harris 1987, 139). There was thus effectively a taboo on radical thinking, especially on republicanism, after the Restoration.

In trying to understand subversive strategies of political writing in this repressive climate after the Restoration, it is vital to bear in mind the central role of censorship: For authors such as Milton, notorious republican and defender of the regicide, or Bunyan, dissenting lay preacher, the Restoration brought the threat of death and both were imprisoned—Milton only briefly late in 1660, Bunyan for some twelve years from 1661 to 1672. This naturally also meant that their publications would be scrutinized by the censor—if they were not published illegally, without a license, as most of Bunyan's works indeed were.[5] Thus, although there was inevitably much unlicensed printing, a number of the period's key texts such as *Paradise Lost* were in fact submitted for a license.

Given this ubiquity of the censor, texts of this period must, as Christopher Hill insisted, be read as "cryptograms to be decoded" (Hill 1977, 65; cf. also Wittreich). Hill, Keeble (*passim*) and others have therefore drawn attention to the extent to which subversive writing of the period had to rely on ambiguity, *double entendre*, multiple allegorical levels, oblique allusiveness, intertextual pointers, hints at anachronistic recontextualization and other strategies of encoding (cf. for instance Hill 1977, *passim*, and Hill 1991, 2f.). Such strategies of evasion are crucial in the negotiation of political taboos, and it is the use of such strategies in *Paradise Lost* and *The Holy War* that I will be concerned with in this essay.

Coded Republicanism in *Paradise Lost*

That *Paradise Lost* can on one level be read as engaging with the English Revolution has long been established.[6] Thus, it cannot be the aim of my essay to attempt another political reading of Milton's opus magnum. What is of particular interest here, however, are the subversive and anti-monarchical tendencies of the epic, more precisely, the subversive strategies which allow Milton to voice revolutionary thoughts after 1660, when such thoughts were tabooed and suppressed by rigid censorship. How, in other words, does the text announce and carry out its transgressive maneuvers?

A passage from the invocation *"in persona auctoris"* (Fowler's note on VII, 1–50) early in book VII will serve as a point of departure. As has long been established, it refers to Milton's own precarious situation after the Restoration and to his "unchanged" political convictions. Fearing imprisonment or even death in these "evil days," slandered by "evil tongues"—not least that of Sir Roger L'Estrange in his vicious pamphlet *No Blinde Guides* of April 1660—the blind poet "in darkness" perseveres with his ambitious work, invoking Urania's help in the endeavor to find readers "fit...though few" willing and able to decode its complexities:

> More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
> To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,
> On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues;
> In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,
> And solitude; yet not alone, while thou
> Visitst my slumbers nightly, or when morn
> Purples the east: still govern thou my song,
> Urania, and fit audience find, though few. (*PL* VII, 24–31)

Such topical references to the time of writing, while also part and parcel of the epic tradition, suggest that the subject matter may not be all that far removed from present or recent realities and thus point toward a topical reading (cf. also *PL* V, 897–907; VI, 29–32 and VI, 145–48).[7]

A further strategy suggesting that *Paradise Lost* might be read as relating very concretely to recent events in England is apparent in a number of passages which function as 'bridges', as it were, between the cosmic events on the literal level of the text and events on earth. Several passages invite one to see heaven as a stand-in for earth and the war in heaven as a coded rendering of the recent English Civil

War. In this vein, Raphael's remark to Adam that the war in heaven, which "surmounts the reach / Of human sense" (*PL* V, 571f.), must be described in earthly terms so as to make it comprehensible to humans, can be read as indicating a close connection between events on earth and in heaven, suggesting that Raphael's description, rather than being a didacticized version of a super-human war in heaven, may indeed be a coded reference to an all-too-human and very recent war on earth:

> ...what if earth
> Be but the shadow of heav'n, and things therein
> Each to other like, more than on earth is thought? (*PL* V, 574–76)

Similarly, Raphael refers to the war in heaven as an "[i]ntestine war" (*PL* VI, 259), that is, a *bellum intestinum*, a civil war—a Latinism the topicality of which is hardly accidental.[8] Raphael further points to the analogy between heaven and earth when he states "earth now / Seemed like to heaven" (*PL* VII, 328f.). In very similar terms, Satan, too, confirms the likeness: "O earth, how like to Heav'n" (*PL* IX, 99).[9]

Thus attuned to potentially subversive topical references and *double entendres*, the careful reader stumbles upon a number of jarring anachronisms, telling parallels and analogies to contemporary political developments and other suggestions of topical referentiality, all of which constitute further strategies of transgressing political taboos. Arguably the most astonishing and certainly the most controversial such strategy lies in the attribution of strong anti-monarchical sentiments to Satan. As Steven Jablonski ("Embodied All in One" and "Freely we serve") and others have long demonstrated, Satan and his rebel angels are clearly republicans, who, in books I, II and especially V, speak a language and use anti-monarchical arguments that must have reminded any contemporary reader of recent republican rhetoric against monarchy in England. Satan's republicanism is remarkably close to Milton's own. Thus, the historian Blair Worden has remarked on "how close is Satan's republicanism, which is accorded its most ample documentation in Book V, to the language of [Milton's] *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish A Free Commonwealth* early in 1660, the year when...Milton is likely, during the succeeding months, to have written Book V" (235; cf. also Jablonski 1994, 118 *et passim*). In Satan's rousing speech to the rebel angels, his anti-monarchical rhetorical question, which seeks to undermine the

legitimacy of Christ's headship of the angels, is indeed remarkably apt also for earthly monarchy:

> Who can in reason then or right assume
> Monarchy over such as live by right
> His equals, if in power and splendour less,
> In freedom equal? (*PL* V, 794–97)[10]

By describing God's rule in terms of earthly regimes, Milton opens up the political reading. In the purely theological realm, he may well have been concerned to "justify the ways of God to men" (*PL* I, 26), but where the tyranny, cruelty and injustice of God go beyond what can be found in the Bible, we should be disposed to look for political parallels in Milton's own day. As Herbert Grierson wryly remarked, suggesting further parallels between heaven and earth: "[I]f the third part of a school or college or nation broke into a rebellion, we should be driven, or strongly disposed, to suspect some mismanagement by the supreme powers" (116).[11] Seen in this light, even the non-chronological structure of *Paradise Lost*, though clearly also a nod to the epic tradition of beginning *in medias res*, can be understood as a strategy of foregrounding. Keeble comments on the structure as follows: "[The] structural design makes a thematic point. The chronologically prior war in heaven is subordinated to man's story.... From potentially an epic tale in its own right it is reduced to a parenthetical episode in the history of humankind" (206). Though I follow Keeble's reading of the structure, I would propose a slightly different emphasis: By firmly situating Satan's republicanism in book V inside the human story, it is structurally suggested that the political rhetoric as well as the battles of alleged-ly far removed celestial or infernal powers may be quite human and bitingly topical after all.

In his 1997 essay " 'Freely we serve': *Paradise Lost* and the Paradoxes of Political Liberty," Steven Jablonski restates part of the problem as a "paradox that has long puzzled readers of *Paradise Lost*." He asks: "[H]ow could Milton, an Arminian, be both a professed enemy of earthly kings and a proponent of liberty and yet represent God in his greatest work as a king and Satan as a proponent of liberty?" (117) That part of the conflict concerned with the seeming contradiction between Milton's advocacy of worldly disobedience and divine obe-dience is easily resolved: Milton evidently thought of heavenly and earthly hierarchies as dichotomous and followed the Old Testament

understanding that false kings and prophets who have usurped divine authority must be removed. Political rebellion on earth may there-fore even serve to reinforce divine hierarchies. Jablonski himself in an earlier essay ("Embodied All in One") very perceptively pointed out Milton's appropriation of the body politic metaphor generally used by royalists to defend the king as 'head' of the state, with the cit-izens serving him as limbs or members. He then shows how Milton in the passage on the Son's election as "Head" of the angels (*PL* V, 600–15) consciously echoes the headship argument usually employed by worldly rulers, but at the same time makes clear the difference between them. While Christ's headship of the angels and his incar-nation are signs of humility, the royal presumption to headship is a form of arrogation and self-aggrandizement. Divine rule and polit-ical rule on earth thus emerge as incommensurable fields (cf. also Smith 263 and Hill 1977, 367). The "principle of reversal" (Smith 254f.) in attributing his own republican sentiments to Satan and the rebel angels can thus by no means be read as encoding Milton's acquies-cence to the monarchy and a retraction of his radicalism during the Revolution. This would be seriously to underestimate the complex-ity of the text and would entail overlooking a good number of radi-cally if obliquely anti-monarchical passages.

Furthermore, it is important to point out that the "principle of reversal" in marking Satan as a republican must not be taken to imply a simplistic identification of God with Charles I and of Satan with Cromwell, suggestive as that constellation might be: *Paradise Lost* is not, after all, an *épopée à clef*. Satan is not only cast in the role of the indomitable republican, he also bears traits of the avarice and ambition of many revolutionary leaders and of the blasphemous speculations of some of the more radical sects who had divided and discredited the supporters of the revolutionary cause—just as the fallen angels also bear many royalist traits. In this vein, Satan is asso-ciated with royalty:

> At length into the limits of the North
> They came, and Satan to his royal seat
> High on a hill.... (*PL* V, 755–57)

The reference to Satan's throne as the "royal seat" by implication identifies Satan with a monarch. This is further enhanced by the ref-erence to "the North" as the origin of evil: Although the association is biblical already (cf. for instance Jer. 1.14), this may well be taken as

a hint at the treachery of the Scots, who broke the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 and changed sides in 1648 to support Charles I against the revolutionary army. In his 1648 sonnet to Fairfax, Milton had explicitly referred to Scotland as "the false North" (1992, 188).[12]

A further subversive strategy is surely the use of fairly precise political and religious key terms which occasionally sound curiously anachronistic in contexts such as the war in heaven or Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden. What, for instance, are we to make of a passage such as the following in Michael's prophecy to Adam about the future of mankind?

> ...one shall rise
> Of proud ambitious heart, who not content
> With fair equality, fraternal state,
> Will arrogate dominion undeserved
> Over his brethren, and quite dispossess
> Concord and law of nature from the earth,...
> From heaven claiming second sovereignty.... (*PL* XII, 24–37)

Though such passages can always be given an 'innocent' theological reading—in this case, the overt reference is to the Old Testament figure of Nimrod (Gen. 10.8–10)—they also function as pointers to a subversive subtext. It is hard not to read this passage in the light of Milton's frequent pronouncements on the evils of monarchy in a number of his prose texts. Throughout his political writings from the 1640s to the eve of the Restoration in 1660, Milton had expressly stated that the very idea of kingship, the very idea of raising one human being above the others was contrary to the teachings of Christ himself. Thus, shortly before the Restoration, in a last-ditch attempt to plead against the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, he wrote in *A Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*: "All Protestants hold that Christ in his church hath left no viceregent of his power, but himself, without deputie, is the only head thereof, governing it from heaven: how then can any Christian-man derive his kingship from Christ?" (Milton 1953–1982, 7:429; cf. also Jablonski 1994, 116). In his 1649 *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, there is a passage that is even closer to the thoughts expressed here: "[N]o Christian Prince...would arrogate unreasonably above human condition, or derogate so basely from a whole Nation of men his Brethren" (Milton 1953, 3:204). In order to do justice to the complexity of Milton's poetry both in this passage and elsewhere, it is necessary to point out that an entirely different reading is also possible: Given Milton's repeated

reference to Cromwell's ambition, and given Cromwell's constant invocation of divine authority—worthy of a Stuart monarch—, the implication may also lead to Cromwell. In addition, the arrogation of dominion over one's "brethren" (*PL* XII, 28) is also resonant when taken to refer to a Puritan republican as ruling over his brethren equals.[13] The predominant implication, however, is anti-monarchical, especially if we consider remarkably similar passages in a number of Milton's previous prose works. Finally, the anti-monarchical impetus of this passage is confirmed in Adam's response to Michael a few lines later:

> ...man over men
> [God] made not lord; such title to himself
> Reserving, human left from human free.
> (*PL* XII, 69–71; cf. the entire passage 64–78)

As many commentators have noted, the entire vision of the future of mankind in Books XI and XII is decidedly republican (cf. for instance Smith 262).

Arguably the most condensed and one of the most seditious political passages of the entire epic is a description of Satan, who, even after the Fall, has not entirely lost his original splendor:

> ...his form had yet not lost
> All her original brightness, nor appeared
> Less then archangel ruined, and the excess
> Of glory obscured: As when the Sun new ris'n
> Looks through the horizontal misty air
> Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
> In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
> On half the nations, and with fear of change
> Perplexes monarchs. (*PL* I, 591–99)[14]

This, incidentally, is the only passage which the censor with his otherwise fortunately limited gift for subversive exegesis apparently found objectionable in the process of licensing *Paradise Lost* for publication. The multilayered metaphorical intricacy of this passage combines many of the strategies discussed above: The comparison of Satan to the misty morning sun, by means of the established association of the sun as a symbol of royalty, identifies Satan with the monarch. On the other hand, the solar eclipse, by means of the same association, functions as an image presaging doom to the monarchy: The

eclipsed sun "sheds ... disastrous twilight ... and with fear of change / Perplexes monarchs." These notions are held together by the image of the rising sun as an established symbol of revolution.

Thus, even if the text as a whole as well as individual passages are remarkably double-edged and can also be read as rather scathingly critical of the revolutionary leaders, the predominant impression yielded by any sensitive decryption of these passages is one of strong republicanism. Achinstein goes so far as to state that "Milton's literary mode in *Paradise Lost* may have been an allegory for king-killing politics" (160). A multiplicity of ambiguities in individual passages, subtle intertextual ploys, and oblique allusions in *Paradise Lost* thus constitute an intriguingly complex arsenal of transgressive strategies to circumvent a taboo on republican radicalism enforced not least by a system of censorship under the notorious *Licensing Act*.

Bunyan, *The Holy War*, and the Stuart Monarchy in the Early 1680s

Like many others during the heady 1640s and 1650s, Bunyan had believed the Millennium to be imminent. Such hopes were dashed after 1660, but this did little to make radicals like Bunyan accept the status quo; it did, however, force them to encode their religious and political dissent and to voice millenarian hopes more obliquely (cf. Hill 1989, 151f.). Several of Bunyan's works such as *The Holy City* of 1665 and *The Holy War* of 1682 are evidence of this submerged millenarianism and coded political critique. Of these, the allegorical prose epic *The Holy War, made by Shaddai upon Diabolus, For the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World, or The Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul*, published after the Licensing Act had lapsed in 1679, is more outspoken in its indictment of the restored Stuart monarchy—if only on one of several allegorical levels—than any of Bunyan's previous works could be.

The Holy War is a complex allegorical epic in the basic form of the classic *psychomachia* (cf. Gurr 2003a, 118ff.): As with *Paradise Lost*, it makes the human soul the site of a struggle between God and Satan, here called "Shaddai"—a Hebrew name for God, especially in Job and Revelation—and "Diabolus." It narrates the history of the "Town of Mansoul" from its foundation through several swings of fortune in the wars of Diabolus against King Shaddai and his son Emanuel, in which Mansoul is the object of contention, to its ultimate liberation from Diabolus by Emanuel, who leaves the town in a precarious but

hopeful balance, with a promise to return for an ultimate period of long and glorious rule.

Similar to *Paradise Lost*, the story begins with the fall of Diabolus and the rebel angels from heaven, their council of war, and their decision to take revenge on King Shaddai by corrupting the crowning achievement of his creation, the Town of Mansoul. Diabolus succeeds in his attempt to have the citizens fall under his sway, and in taking control of Mansoul, he remodels the corporation by replacing officials loyal to Shaddai with his own men. Shaddai then sends the Captains Boanerges ["Son of Thunder," or "Powerful Preaching"],[15] Conviction, Judgement and Execution to liberate the town. But it is only Emanuel who is finally capable of defeating Diabolus and of redeeming Mansoul. The city, however, relapses into its old evil ways, Emanuel withdraws himself to his Father's court, and Diabolus can recapture the town, but not the citadel—glossed as "The heart." After a period of anguished civil war between the Mansoulians and the Diabolonians, after the moral reformation of Mansoul and much petitioning for Emanuel's pity, Diabolus is finally chased out and the army of Bloodmen and Doubters he raised for his last stand is defeated. Most of the Diabolonians are executed, but the Lords Unbelief and Carnal Sense survive and continue to lurk in Mansoul as a constant threat.

This epic of some 250 pages operates on three, occasionally four, allegorical levels and thus encodes its subversive politics behind several layers of religious allegory. The first of these levels corresponds to the individual life of the Christian soul—the town of Mansoul here represents the individual Christian soul. This is the most sustained and consistently present of the allegorical planes. On the second level, the story of the Town of Mansoul recounts Christian world history from pre-lapsarian innocence via the Fall, Christ's redemption, falling away from early Christian faith, the rise of papacy and the reformation to Bunyan's own time. On the third, less consistently present level, many of the events in *The Holy War* can be read as a Nonconformist commentary on the contemporary politics of Bunyan's time, with the English Revolution, the Restoration and the persecution of dissenters to the very time of composition in the early 1680s (for a succinct account of the political context and a brief reading of *The Holy War* cf. Greaves 2001 and Hill 1989, 240). This is the level I am mainly concerned with here. On a fourth level of interpretation only occasionally present, the events might be read in terms of the Millenarianism of the biblical book of Revelation. This will

only be of marginal interest to my reading. Behind these four levels, of course, lies the traditional fourfold interpretation of scripture, although the further levels here do not neatly correspond to the traditional *sensus allegoricus, sensus tropologicus* and *sensus anagogicus*.[16]

In his rhymed preface to *The Holy War*, Bunyan hints at a topical relevance of the epic by stating that his are not "vain stories":

> But, Readers, I have somewhat else to do,
> Than with vain stories thus to trouble you;
> What here I say, some men do know so well,
> They can with tears and joy the story tell. (*HW*, 1)

The first taking of Mansoul by Diabolus and the ensuing events, for instance, can be read on all three relevant levels. Diabolus remodels the town by replacing the Lord Mayor, Lord Understanding, with Lord Lustings, and the Recorder, Mr. Conscience, with Mr. Forget-good (cf. *HW* 18, 25), and, having corrupted Mr. Wilbewill, standing for the much-contested free will, makes him *"Captain* of the *Castle,* Governour of the *Wall,* and keeper of the Gates of *Mansoul"* (*HW* 22). Diabolus encourages *"the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life"* (*HW* 24) to further alienate the town and its citizens from King Shaddai. On the level of individual Christian spiritual history, Diabolus' successful temptation of Mansoul, his ensuing debauching of its former Recorder, Mr. Conscience, and the dissolution of all order and reasonable conduct in the town correspond to phases of sin and temptation in an individual Christian's life. In the eschatological terms of Christian world history, it corresponds to the Fall and the following moral corruption of the human soul, while on the level of political commentary, the tyrannical "new King" (*HW* 28) Diabolus bears traits of Charles II, and the Diabolonian maltreatment of the righteous inhabitants of Mansoul recalls the persecution of Nonconformists after the Restoration. Here and elsewhere throughout the text, the eschatological level is telescoped into the level of contemporary politics: the veiled references to the persecution of Nonconformists under the Stuarts in the continued attacks of the Diabolonians from outside and within the town after the second liberation of Mansoul by Emanuel can simultaneously be read as standing for the continuing threat to 'true Christianity' posed by unbelief, papacy and persecution.

All in all, there is a fairly sustained level of political commentary: The remodeling of the town by Diabolus on his first taking it

recalls the remodeling of corporations in the last years of Charles II in order to gain control of the boroughs and to curb the influence of Whigs and dissenters. The royal party sought to make corporations yield their old charters and urged acceptance of new ones. The new burgesses and aldermen installed by Diabolus under the Mayor Lord Lustings and the Recorder Forget-good must have seemed to Bunyan's contemporaries "caricatures of the Tory-Anglicans" taking office as a result of Charles II's remodeling of the corporations (cf. Greaves 1989, 150). Though Bunyan's Bedford only received its new charter in 1684, the process was well under way; the outcome was plain for all to see from the late 1670s and early 1680s onward and required no divinatory powers on Bunyan's part to portray in 1682 (cf. Sharrock and Forrest xx–xxv, xxxiii–xxxv, and 256n, as well as Greaves 1989, 149 *et passim*).

But Bunyan's indictment of the Stuart monarchy is even more drastic in the strong hints of an equation of Charles II with Diabolus: under "the new King or rather rebellious Tyrant" (*HW* 28), Bloodmen persecute the righteous citizens of Mansoul, which brings to mind the persecution of Nonconformists after 1660. Among the army of Bloodmen (*HW* 228) Diabolus launches against Mansoul in his last stand are Captain Nimrod and Captain Pope, who may be taken as references to the Stuart monarch and to the fear of a resurgence of Catholicism under James II during the Exclusion Crisis of 1679–1681.

Even the ending, the ultimate defeat of Diabolus, and Emanuel's concluding exhortation "hold fast till I come," though apparently no longer having a parallel in the dire political climate of the early 1680s, may be read as expressing a political hope: "[W]as Bunyan expressing hope that the Protestant prince, Monmouth, would soon save Mansoul?" (Greaves 2001, 282) The reference would then be to the hope for a successful rebellion of Charles II's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, a rebellion that did indeed occur in 1685 but failed dismally.

In his essay on Bunyan and the Stuart state, Richard L. Greaves has perceptively drawn attention to a curious contrast in Bunyan's political thought: Bunyan aggressively indicts the Stuart monarchy and, at the same time, advocates political quietism and meek suffering under worldly authorities, a position he explicitly derives from Romans 13.1 with its famous support for earthly rulers: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Greaves harmonizes

this contrast as a "constant...advocacy of passive disobedience" and speaks of Bunyan's "militancy of the spirit, not the sword" (Greaves 1989, 160). This, as Hill and Achinstein have shown, underestimates the radicalism of Bunyan's antagonism to the Stuarts and, I believe, explains away the inconsistencies in Bunyan's views on monarchy and kingship. Invoking parallels from Bunyan's other writings of the period, Hill persuasively argues that Bunyan did espouse—albeit in the circuitously indirect manner enforced by censorship and the continuing threat of further imprisonment—the overthrow of the Stuart regime. Hill draws attention to the parallels with *Antichrist and his Ruin*, which Bunyan in all likelihood wrote early in the 1680s but which was impossible to publish under the prevailing conditions of censorship. In *Antichrist and his Ruin*, "Bunyan insisted that Antichrist—like Diabolus in *The Holy War*—has set up his own church government, officers and discipline....He did not say that this government must be overthrown, but the conclusion was inescapable" (Hill 1989, 153, cf. Achinstein 101–7). Liberation from oppression, it is clear through all allegorical levels of Bunyan's epic, can only be effected by means of military power and violence.

To conclude: The literature of dissent after the Restoration of 1660, with Milton and Bunyan as its two most important figures, who both wrote at a time during which the taboo on radical political thought was enforced by means of rigid censorship and political oppression, provided generations of subversive writers throughout the later seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries all the way until the Reform Bill Period of the 1830s with inspiration and with techniques for the circumvention of censorship (for this tradition cf. for instance Thompson, as well as Achinstein 243–55). One such technique, as we have seen, is to suggest that events or characters in a text seemingly unrelated to contemporary politics—whether an account of the expulsion from Eden or of a battle for Mansoul—might be read as being highly topical after all. Given my key concern in this essay—the relationship between political taboo, censorship and Milton's and Bunyan's ingenious techniques of subversion—, a final instance of this technique in *The Holy War* brings me back full circle to the opening of the essay: Upon his first taking of the Town of Mansoul, Diabolus hires one "Mr. Filth" to encourage the publication of filthy literature, to suppress more worthy writing, and to "give licence" to sin and indulgence (*HW* 31f.). Many contemporaries would have recognized "Mr. Filth" as a satirical indictment of none other than Sir Roger L'Estrange, royalist pamphleteer of the

coarser kind and licenser of the press who made life difficult for Nonconformist writers and printers throughout the Restoration (Sharrock and Forrest xxxiii and 257)—and who, in 1688, the year in which the Glorious Revolution finally cost him his job, was to subscribe to a special edition of *Paradise Lost*.

Notes

1. For the radicalism of Milton and Bunyan after the Restoration cf. especially Hill 1977, 1989 and 1991; Meller.
2. For accounts of the Restoration and the consequences of the Restoration Settlement cf. for instance Hutton 157; Harris; Houston and Pincus; for the situation in London cf. Gassenmeier 11–21 *et passim*.
3. Radicalism and non-conformism after 1660 have been widely discussed and still generate a lot of interest. Cf. especially Keeble, surely still the best book on the subject; cf. also Jose; Hutton; Greaves 1990; Hirst and Strier; Morton and Smith; for the role of the English Revolution and the later seventeenth century for eighteenth-century radicalism cf. Nünning 142–61 *et passim*. For the tradition of radicalism—including praise of the 1649 regicide—preached from the dissenting pulpits in the eighteenth century, cf. Bradley 146ff.
4. For the exclusion crisis cf. especially Knights; Harris 1987, 96–188; for Tory propaganda cf. ibid. 133–55.
5. For censorship cf. for instance Keeble 110–20 *et passim*; Hill 1991, 2f.; Quint.
6. Like anyone attempting a political reading of *Paradise Lost*, I am indebted to Christopher Hill's scholarship. Cf. Hill 1977, 370ff. for a related reading of a number of the following parallels. For a brief survey of previous readings all the way from the later seventeenth century via the Romantics to key positions in the twentieth century, cf. Gurr 2003b.
7. Cf. Achinstein 121ff. and Smith 256f.
8. Cf. also VI, 667f., in the context of the war in heaven: "Infernal noise; war seemed a civil game / To this uproar."
9. Cf. also VII, 617: "this new-made world, another heaven."
10. Cf. the entire passage V, 772–802; for anti-monarchical images in *Paradise Lost* cf. also Davies and Bennett.
11. Cf. also his remark that "Heaven [in *Paradise Lost*] is a totalitarian state" (117).
12. For the North as the seat of evil cf. also the "Argument" to book V and V, 688–90.
13. For different readings of this passage cf. for instance Hill 1991, 3; Smith 262; for a survey of previous comments cf. Fowler's note on this passage.

14. For censorship of this passage and a compelling subversive reading cf. Meller 531f. Cf. also Keeble 118f. and Fowler's note on lines 596ff. in his edition of *Paradise Lost*.

15. The name derives from Mark, 3.16f.

16. For the Bible as an inspiring source for subversive typological reading and writing in Bunyan's case cf. Achinstein, 101–7.

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