

## **The Miltonic Smile**

- I. Observer similes
  - 1. 1.193 ff., the pilot of the night-foundered skiff
  - 2. 1.284 ff., the Tuscan artist (Galileo)
  - 3. 1.301 ff., the sojourners of Goshen (Israelites)
  - 4. 1.777 ff., the belated peasant
- II. Theories of the Miltonic Simile
  - 1. Stanley's Fish's temporalization of the simile
  - 2. Geoffrey Hartman's spatialization of the simile
- III. Simile and Orthodoxy

The precursors of Milton's "autumnal leaves . . . in Vallombrosa" (PL 1.300-304):

Why ask my birth, Diomedes? Very like leaves  
upon this earth are the generations of men--  
old leaves cast on the ground by wind, young leaves  
the greening forest bears when spring comes in.  
So mortals pass; one generation flowers  
even as another dies away. (Iliad 6.148ff., trans. Fitzgerald)

Here a crowd came streaming to the banks  
Mothers and men, the forms with all life spent  
Of heroes great in valor, boys and girls  
Unmarried, and young sons laid on the pyre  
Before their parents' eyes--as many souls  
As leaves that yield their hold on boughs and fall  
Through forests in the early frosts of autumn. (Aeneid 6.309 ff., trans. Fitzgerald)

As, in the autumn, leaves detach themselves,  
first one and then the other, till the bough  
sees all its fallen garments on the ground,

similarly, the evil seed of Adam  
descended from the shoreline one by one,  
when signaled, as a falcon--called--will come.

so do they move across the darkened waters;  
even before they reach the farther shore,  
new ranks already gather on this bank. (Inferno 3:112 ff., trans. Mandelbaum)

For the shield simile, cf. Iliad 19.373 and Aeneid 3.637  
Galileo's Siderius Nuncius (Starry Messenger) (1610)  
For other appearances of Galileo in Paradise Lost, see 3.588, and 5.261