correctly understand Homer to say to the muses, "you are present," and that he deliberately change the sense of those words when addressing them to the Spirit. Had it been possible, as I have found it is not, to adduce a Renaissance text of the *Iliad* in which the poet says to the muses, "you were present," this argument would have lost some of its force. But so far as the Greek text is concerned, I find I have mounted a defense where none was required.

My purpose in citing the scholium should therefore be taken more generally as demonstrating an impulse of which the scholium is but an example. I mean the impulse to rationalize Homer's statement by altering the loosely paratactic connection of its parts ("you are goddesses, and are present, and know all things") so that a causal relation emerges: "you were present and can [therefore] remember what happened." For as an eminent paleographer has said (making, I suppose, a different point), there is more to the text than the text. There is also the proclivity of readers to misapprehend, or deliberately to warp, those hard points in a text that seem almost to protrude from an even and inoffensive surface of words. For the smoothing down of such points translation is a useful abrasive, as may be seen in several of the more interesting Renaissance translations of Homer, although not, it should be admitted, in the majority, which follow on this point the accurate rendering of Andreas Divus. Valla, however, must be corrected by Chapman, who employs redundancy to make the sense clearer ("for you / Are Goddesses; are present *here*, are wise, and all things know" [my emphasis]) while more prudent spirits, such as Politian and Ogilby, drop the ambiguous phrase altogether. Of course Thomas Hobbes must tell the muses how they know what they know: "For goddesses you are and present were, / And all that pas'd at Troy can truly tell."

What significance can such trivial pursuits have for Milton? The statement "you are present," precisely because it is open to misapprehension, has more information than it does in either Chapman or Hobbes. And although Milton would have read it in the present tense, he nevertheless says to the Spirit, "Thou from the first / Wast present," thus exploiting, by a deliberately inaccurate copy, the tendency of Homer's words to drift into error. Yet it is an error that takes us deeper, Milton might say, into the aboriginal truth of those words, which to Homer was but imperfectly known.

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Tragedy in the Intimations Ode

To the Editor:

I cannot but agree with Joseph Sitterson, Jr.'s contention in "The Genre and Place of the Intimations Ode" (101 [1986]: 24–35) that Wordsworth's great ode displays "generic comprehensiveness" (27), particularly in its inclusion of lyric within a larger narrative plot. There is, however, another genre that makes its presence felt perhaps even more strongly—tragedy. Furthermore, a consciousness of a tragic structure goes a considerable way toward helping us resolve the question of closure that Sitterson introduces at the beginning of his piece and the notion of incompleteness with which he ends it. But at the same time, recognizing a tragic element in the ode tends to strengthen the author's argument that Wordsworth here defines and develops the odic form substantively.

In a manner in which the more general term *plot* cannot serve, the idea of tragedy directs the reader's attention to the hero's pride, fall, and submission to his fate, within a structure that is more dramatic than Sitterson or, earlier, Chayes (*PMLA* 79 [1964]: 77) suggests. These successive states of the tragic hero broadly parallel the customary division of the poem and the traditional view of tragic structure that comes down from Aristotle: beginning or exposition (sts. 1–4), middle or action proper (sts. 5–8), and end or resolution accompanied by a choric commentary and celebration (sts. 9–11). Although the role of the odic voice is too complex to go into here in any depth, it is obvious that the poet-hero presents with meditative and emotive interaction three states of mind in response to three changing relationships between nature and humanity. In part 1, the exposition of present state, the hero asserts a depressed but proud isolation from nature. I will mention only two instances of this pride. One is the self-sufficiency implied in lines 23–24: "A timely utterance gave that thought relief / And I again am strong." Another example is the speaker's statements that the visionary gleam has "fled," that the glory has "passed away." In other words, the change is not his fault—he denies responsibility. I am overstating this aspect of the speaker's mood to some extent, of course, but there is little doubt that the present state is endured with a certain degree of pride. There is no question about the ignorance since the exposition ends with the central question, "Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

In part 2, the tragic action proper, Wordsworth dramatizes the process leading to the depressed state described in the exposition. The child (the "little Actor") creates or imitates in "joy and pride" the whole of life but, unlike the poet-hero of part 1, glories in his independence and self-sufficiency. Behind this mundane, pseudoartistic "dream" of human life, however, Wordsworth presents the two mighty antagonists contending for the child's soul. God and Earth struggle toward a resolution of the conflict that human beings experience subjectively as a conflict between joy (the divine) and separateness (the natural and human). In acting "blindly with thy blessedness at strife" (line 126), the child represents the poet's own tragic conflict and that of humanity in general.

The hymn of reconciliation in stanzas 10–11 arises from the knowledge and the humbled spirit presented in stanza 9. Now it is not "I" but "nature" (with the small *n* indicating human nature) that sustains us by recollecting the moments of doubt and terror that confirm our origi-

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nal faith. With humility and knowledge ("deep . . . as life"), pride and sullenness are replaced by an acceptance of "human" fate, which involves at the present moment the pain of separation in the struggle toward "the human heart by which we live."

As the recognition, therefore, stanza 9 presents the mode of interaction between the temporal self and the immortal soul, a resolution achieved after the series of separations described in the child's actions as well as by the lament in stanzas 1–4. The first crisis is birth, which initiates an extended struggle between Earth and God and culminates in the alienation and depression described in stanzas 1–4 when the poet-hero finds that the proud independence toward which the child struggles does not sustain the joy that heaven bequeathed him at birth.

If we think of the last two stanzas as a coda following a completed action and resolution, which is to say the conflict between Earth and God for the child's soul, a good deal of the ambiguity of the last few lines is cleared up. The child's struggle *against* joy constitutes something of an analogy to the struggle of tragic heroes like Prometheus and Oedipus, who struggle against Zeus and fate. The striking simile that ends stanza 8, which I have already alluded to ("deep almost as life"), anticipates the poem's final statement, "thoughts too deep for tears." What emerges from the tragic struggle against the state of blessedness is a new relationship between humanity and nature founded on a deep ambiguous knowledge of life that resolves the conflict. The mature mind experiences nature *in terms of* humanity. In doing so, it has left behind the spontaneous abandon of childhood and youth along with the transitional state described in stanzas 1–4.

In its transition from the I-isolated of stanzas 1–4 to the I-representative of stanzas 9–11, the self (within the poem, not in any pseudobiographical referentiality) passes through an intermediate state of creative consciousness in stanzas 7–8. But here, as in lines 23–24, creativity implies, or indeed entails, separateness. This separateness, as an aspect of the self, must somehow be absorbed into the I-representative, or more precisely the we-inclusive, of stanzas 9–11. The we-inclusive achieves an identity in both the subjective and the objective points of view. This psychological integration is accompanied by an integration of the physical and spiritual dimensions of being, which is the statement of stanza 9 and is celebrated in stanzas 10–11.

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Chaucer's Voices

To the Editor:

In " 'A Poet Ther Was': Chaucer's Voices in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*" (101 [1986]: 154–69), Barbara Nolan discovers three voices, but there is no need for them. Indeed, Occam's razor prohibits them, and if we sharpen Occam's razor on the strop of the mythopoetic spring themes that Nolan discovers in the first eighteen lines, we find that there are only two narrative voices in the Prologue, both of them belonging to pilgrims. Moreover, when Harry Bailly takes the floor, the narrator himself reports that Harry is speaking, and thus all of Chaucer's representations are as oblique as anything conceived in the subtle mind of Virginia Woolf. We, the readers, become eavesdroppers. Either there is one narrator who reports the speeches of the other pilgrims as they speak or there are as many narrative voices as there are pilgrims who speak, as indicated by the changes in diction.

The time sequence of the passage is "Whan . . . thanne . . . Bifil that in that season . . . whan the sonne was to reste . . . erly for to ryse. . . . tyme and space,/Er that ferther . . . first bigynne," and that exhaustive sequence occupies not the first eighteen lines but the first forty-two lines. It carries us to the very beginning of the description of the knight. The narrator states that he will tell us of the "personages" on the pilgrimage while he has "tyme and space" (35). Thus the narrator's consciousness that he is occupying time is similar to the way the early Heidegger's *Dasein* discovers itself in time. With this perspective on the text we open the textuality to a Heideggerian analysis of time as Chaucer perceives it, a reading that I can only hint at within the limits of this letter but that, as all readers can see for themselves, opens our reading tremendously and allows the sacredness and the profanity of time to mix.

To return to the first-person narration without taking the "tyme and space" to deconstruct Chaucer's General Prologue, the very fact that the levels of diction are uneven, as Nolan has shrewdly observed, opens the text to an investigation of the reasons for this unevenness. Perhaps (to coax Chaucer to the analyst's couch) Chaucer has some uncertainty about how to begin his narrative. Perhaps he feels unworthy of the project, perhaps he is unsure whether the narrative voice should participate in the action or remain distant from it, perhaps he is unsure what *fama* will make of him presenting himself as a pilgrim. Will the future make Chaucer a pilgrim-in-fact when, for the purposes of *The Canterbury Tales*, he is only a pilgrim-in-fiction? Does this thought make Chaucer uneasy? Or, to invoke Occam's razor once again and seek the simplest solution, is Chaucer qua author allowing the first-person narrator to follow the established fourteenth-century custom of beginning with the general and ending with the specific?

I sense that this last question is one to which we must resoundingly answer "Yes!" Scholastic logic requires it. The fourteenth century's logical prejudice forms the pretext of the text, which we, in turn, can deconstruct as the occasion for a discussion of logic and time. There is no need to multiply voices here; there is a need to read Chaucer for the uncommonly good writer that he is.

To cast my argument in its simplest terms: Chaucer

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