

***Areopagitica* in the Licensing Controversy: Milton's Rhetorical Strategies and Modes**

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As Norbrook properly puts it, Milton's *Areopagitica* is "one of the most erudite and allusive political pamphlets ever composed" (Norbrook, *Republic* 125). It cannot be denied that the profound and allusive character of *Areopagitica* is the main reason for the interest of numerous critics and scholars with a variety of critical perspectives. Among the numerous interpretations of *Areopagitica*, recent criticism generally reveals three distinctive features in its implicit or explicit disapproval of readings of the tract as a libertarian document endorsing complete freedom of speech and of the press. One of the features is a strong argument against the prevalent reading of *Areopagitica* as a mystifyingly idealist and libertarian document, identifying instead in the tract an intolerant and only limitedly liberal Milton. The most notable critic of this orientation may well be John Illo. For Illo, both Milton's adoption of the Isocratean speech in which Isocrates urged the Areopagus to regulate and control the manners of Athenians and his intolerance towards Roman Catholicism, Anglo-Catholicism, Laudian Anglicanism, and even radical dissent or heterodoxy, are the apparent evidence that Milton's idea of freedom of speech and the press is fundamentally not democratic but aristocratic. *Areopagitica* is seen not as a libertarian document for universal freedom of the press, but as "a political document of repression" (21). Illo's stance develops from his counter-argument to the popular misconception that Milton is supporting a universal and absolute

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freedom of publication. Nevertheless, his analysis tends to misjudge Milton's partisanship in 1644 in assuming that Milton is in opposition to radical sectaries; more seriously, it leads to an undervaluing of Milton's political calculations in his adoption of the Isocratic rhetorical model.

The second critical tendency is observed by Christopher Kendrick and Lana Cable, who view Milton's use of images and metaphors in the tract as an embodiment of his radical individualism. For Kendrick, Milton's intentional selection of classical oration in *Areopagitica* - "a fairly well-defined argumentative structure" (23) - functions as an "official" or "strategic ethos" (23) calculated to persuade the Erastians (those who were in favour of the war with the king but opposed to the separation of church from state) in the toleration controversy. This "official ethos", as represented in argumentative discourse, clashes with Milton's passionate "self-validating ethos" (23), which embodies another characteristic element of language in *Areopagitica* - "a network of figuration" (29) - which exists at a different level from the "official ethos" and opens up a rift in it. For Kendrick, the "self-validating ethos" functions as an important means of embodying Milton's subversive ethos and radical individualism. Thus Kendrick, in the context of the toleration controversy, highlights Milton's political strategy of appealing to the Erastians with his argumentative discourse and in it the clashes between two levels of language, the argumentative and the figurative. In contrast, ideology for Cable is basically something that impedes the incessant flow of meaning, desire and imagination, and *Areopagitica's* truth lies in the image construction itself as opposed to any fixed ideology that underlies its rational arguments (117-43). Though Kendrick and Cable appear to take contrasting views of the relationship between ideology and language in their readings of *Areopagitica*, their arguments implicitly assume that argumentative discourse in the tract is linked with an

official ideology, and that the real force of Milton's language lies in figurative language antithetical to the argumentative discourse. The problem with these two critics is that they view the relation between argumentative and figurative language as antithetical and non-relational, and, more seriously, they reduce the value of Milton's use of metaphors and images by attributing it to his radical individualism.

The general tenor of the third critical direction is concerned with opposition to such "a paradigm of individualism" (Kolbrenner 60) as is shown in the cases of Kendrick and Cable and which has dominated Milton criticism. The leading critics of this critical current are probably David Norbrook and William Kolbrenner. Norbrook and Kolbrenner, questioning the paradigm of subjectivity founded on a separation of the private and public spheres, seek to position Milton's *Areopagitica* within the wider and more general political context of Renaissance republicanism and thus to identify the confluence of private and public spheres in the tract (Kolbrenner 57-78 and Norbrook, *Republic* 118-39). Norbrook and Kolbrenner offer a critical adjustment to the reading of *Areopagitica* dominated by a modern liberal and individualistic perspective. Nevertheless, it is also true that their analyses keep us from fully understanding Milton's complex rhetorical gestures as related to the licensing controversy.

The common feature of all these critical tendencies is that they miss the complexity of Milton's rhetorical strategies and modes in the immediate context of the contemporary licensing controversy. Before we look at the singular traits of Milton's rhetoric in *Areopagitica*, we need to commence by observing the political and economic implications of Parliament's reimposition of the severe 1637 Star Chamber Decree. Parliament abolished the Star Chamber in July 1641, which led to the *de facto* cessation of a censorship system which had operated in the alliance of political, religious and economic interests among the crown, the church and the Stationers' Company. The

abolition of the Star Chamber, however, did not indicate an intention to open up complete freedom of speech and of the press to the public, given the fact that Parliament introduced its own licensing measures three times before the Licensing Order of 1643: the measures of 29 January 1642, 26 August 1642 and 8 March 1643. These three measures were motivated primarily by Parliament's diverse purposes to eliminate chaos and piracy in the printing industry, protect parliamentary activities and proceedings from its opponents, suppress royalist propaganda and check the widening currency of various sects' radical ideas. The measures reflected to a great extent Parliament's unceasing concern with the political and ideological functions of the press, though it was at the time preoccupied with more crucial constitutional and religious issues like the war with the king and the abolition and re-establishment of a state church. Parliament's awareness of the ideological role of the press and its inclination to set up a new state-controlled censoring apparatus to supplant the royal and ecclesiastical system of censorship culminated in the Licensing Order of 16 June 1643.

The 1643 Licensing Order is dominated by two main points. One is that in the Order Parliament reintroduced almost all of the stringent censorship machinery of the 1637 Star Chamber Decree including pre-publication licensing, registration of all printing materials with the names of author, printer and publisher in the Register at Stationers' Hall, search, seizure and destruction of any books offensive to the government, and arrest and imprisonment of any offensive writers, printers and publishers. The Licensing Order was the product of Parliament's desire to establish its own censoring machine in place of the royal and ecclesiastical system for controlling the press. For this purpose, on the one hand Parliament relied on the support of the Stationers' Company - "the most successful enforcement agency of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century government" (Siebert 166) - in

return for its monopoly of the printing trade. But on the other it set out to build up its own licensing system of which the administrative and judicial functions were assigned to both Houses and their committees. This parliamentary scheme was “a devious political strategy of entangling commercial self-interest with political and religious censorship” (Wilding 7), to borrow an expression of the Order, “according to Ancient custom” (796), and it was also an announcement of Parliament’s resolution to take the censoring machine into its own hands.

If Parliament took a leading role in controlling the press in the traditional alliance between political forces and economic interests, the licensing controversy of 1643-45 was also bound up with the Presbyterian faction’s political and religious ambition to strengthen their power in Parliament and the Westminster Assembly of Divines along with the Presbyterians boosting their power outside Parliament. The Presbyterian designs met with fierce opposition from five Independent ministers in the Assembly of Divines who kindled the toleration controversy with the publication of *An Apologeticall Narration* (January 1644). The toleration controversy developed into the Independents’ and the sects’ demand for their right to form gathered churches outside the Presbyterian form of church government as a national church, which enabled the anti-Presbyterian forces to form a political coalition during the period 1644-45. The licensing controversy was brought into sharp focus in the broad conflict over toleration and formed an important part of the toleration controversy. Although the licensing controversy was raised as an important issue within the toleration controversy, it could be seen on its own as a crucial index to “a significant expansion in the political public sphere” (Norbrook, “*Areopagitica*” 7) consequent upon the emergence of civil society and the corresponding ideological and linguistic conflict between contending social forces. For while

Parliament and the Presbyterians tried to restrict the possibility of the rights of those who enjoyed free circulation of discourse in a sudden expansion of the political public sphere during the period 1641-43, radical printers and writers like William Larner, Richard Overton, John Lilburne, William Walwyn, Henry Robinson and John Milton were not above going beyond the bounds of the licensing measure in order to extend the possibility of the language. During the period 1644-45, all pamphlets by these radical writers were published without authorization, that is, without licence or imprint. Their efforts to extend the possibility of the language of their rights to publication, in actuality, were made in their challenges to authority and in their questionings of the validity of the law imposed by authority.

It is unlikely that Milton did not know of Parliament's intention to merge its political interests with the Stationers' Company's economic interests in its reintroduction of a strict censoring machine in 1643. Besides, he might also have been conscious of Parliament's unwillingness to lead a more radical reform and of its gradual return to a conservative direction, with the Presbyterian faction's strengthening of power in Parliament during the period 1643-45. In particular, when he noticed that the Parliament's Licensing Order was being used as a means both of suppressing the radical ideas of the emerging Independents and sects and of advancing Presbyterian factional interests, Milton may have perceived the illegitimacy and partiality of the ideological move Parliament was trying to make through the Licensing Order. If this was the case, Milton's call for the revocation of the Licensing Order in *Areopagitica* could have been inseparable from his political awareness of this exercise of parliamentary control over the production and circulation of specific discourses. From this perspective, *Areopagitica* could be read as a product of Milton's acute observation and implicit criticism of such ideological maneuvering of

Parliament, from the perspective of the political alliance between Independents and sectaries.

One of the remarkable features of *Areopagitica*, however, is that Milton's criticism is not being made in a direct way as in his anti-prelatical tracts. Milton's criticism of Episcopalians' strategies of legitimation took the form of a bitter and virulent polemic; by contrast, his opposition to Parliament's press censorship in *Areopagitica* is posed in a considerably indirect and oblique way. That is, it is presented in such a way as to appear as if his criticism of Parliament was not blame but praise and advice, as he writes, "His highest praising is not flattery, and his plainest advice is a kinde of praising" (*CPW* II 488).¹ In the circumstances where he should criticize the unfairness of Parliament's "publish Order" (*CPW* II 489), Milton makes every effort with highly rhetorical ingenuity to show that his advice has nothing to do with flattery or criticism but springs from his cordial praise of Parliament's actions and its wisdom:

Neither is it in Gods esteeme the diminution of his glory, when honourable things are spoken of good men and worthy Magistrates; which if I now first should begin to doe, after so fair a progresse of your laudable deeds, and such a long obligation upon the whole Realme to your indefatigable vertues, I might be justly reckn'd among the tardiest, and the unwillingest of them that praise yee.
(*CPW* II 487)

This paradoxical inversion and irony can be said to have been the result of Milton's shrewd rhetorical strategy of complicated negotiation with Parliament. In November 1644 when he wrote *Areopagitica*, Milton may have thought of Parliament less as "an energetic vanguard of institutional change" (Norbrook, *Republic* 130),

¹ Quotations from *Areopagitica* are taken from *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, and I use its abbreviation as *CPW* in the text.

as Norbrook has assumed, than as a dominant power which might abandon such institutional reform as he expected it to make, institutional reform which would secure “the utmost bound of civill liberty” (*CPW* II 487). Thus, it could be inferred that Milton’s rhetorical modes were part of a complex mechanism by which he engaged in skilful negotiation with, and implied criticism of, the dominant power. This rhetorical enactment is achieved notably through his capacity to handle with utmost skill the genres and constituent elements of classical rhetoric.

Areopagitica conforms faithfully to the rules of classical rhetoric at the level of the whole structure. Its basic format is that of classical deliberative rhetoric; and Milton faithfully represents the rhetorical genre as, in modeling himself on Isocrates and presenting Parliament as the Athenian Areopagus, he aims to persuade Parliament to repeal the 1643 Licensing Order. Milton’s assumption of the role of counselor addressing his opinions to Parliament as governing body in deliberative rhetoric and his courteous praise of Parliament in the epideictic rhetoric used in his *exordium* and *peroratio* determine the deferential tone of the tract as a whole.

Coupled with this deliberative and epideictic rhetoric in the tract are the six parts of classical rhetoric (*exordium*, *narratio*, *divisio*, *confirmatio*, *refutatio* and *peroratio*) belonging to *dispositio*, which serve as a firm foundation for its logical configuration. In particular, *narratio*, *divisio*, *confirmatio* and *refutatio* are major elements which constitute the logical arrangement of his four arguments: (1) the history of licensing, (2) its bad effects on reading, (3) the ineffectuality of licensing, (4) the harm done to the pursuit of learning and truth. The foundation of *Areopagitica*’s argumentative structure is built on the underlying connection between deliberative rhetoric and the four parts of classical rhetoric. For when the primary aim of deliberative rhetoric is to prove whether legislation relating to public

affairs is advantageous or disadvantageous to a given society, Milton tries to prove that the Parliament's 1643 Licensing Order is far from being profitable through a variety of proofs and refutations of possible objections in his four arguments. In line with these rhetorical elements which feature the tract's argumentative texture, Milton makes effective use of other crucial elements of classical rhetoric, particularly *elocutio* and its crucial components, tropes and figures. *Elocutio* is reflected in Milton's capacity to define the overall polite tone of the tract, and his effective use of figurative devices is concerned with his intention to persuade Parliament to repeal the Licensing Order by enhancing the power of emotional appeal.

In *Areopagitica*, Milton's choice of a deliberative and epideictic genre and the logical deployment of his arguments bear some similarities to Joseph Hall's modes of discourse in *An Humble Remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament*. As in the treatise of Hall, *Areopagitica* takes the form of Milton's eulogy to Parliament, in keeping with the configurations of logical construction. Milton's preference for these modes of classical rhetoric in *Areopagitica* demonstrates most distinctively how he intended to win the support of an educated elite in and outside Parliament by giving a clear indication of the extent of his rhetorical education. In a sense, the modes of classical rhetoric can be said to have been part of a standardized discursive rule among those who were trained in the humanist education at the time. Milton appears to adopt "the known forms and recognized norms" (Bourdieu, "censorship" 139) entirely, in Bourdieu's words, by depending on "instruments of production, such as rhetorical devices, genres, legitimate styles and manners and, more generally, all the formulations destined to be 'authoritative' and to be cited as examples of 'good usage'" (Bourdieu, "production" 58). This recourse to "the known forms and recognized norms" on the surface of the tract's rhetorical structure, as with Hall, gives the

impression that Milton does not have any intention of discrediting Parliament's authority. In his apparent adoption of this structure of classical rhetoric, Milton attempts artful negotiation with Parliament in three ways. First, he labours to maintain his polite attitude towards Parliament as far as possible when calling for repeal of the Licensing Order. Secondly, he assumes that the Licensing Order might have been reimposed irrespective of Parliament's intentions, even though he knew that Parliament took a leading role in enacting the law: "That ye like not now these most certain Authors of this licencing order, and that all sinister intention was farre distant from your thoughts, when ye were importuned the passing it, all men who know the integrity of your actions, and how ye honour Truth, will clear yee readily" (*CPW* II 507). Thirdly, he tries to avail himself of the rhetorical effect of his eulogy on Parliament to the full by emphasizing parliamentarians' wisdom and virtues in such phrases as "your faithful guidance and undaunted Wisdome," "your laudable deeds," "your indefatigable vertues" (II 487), "the integrity of your actions" (II 507) and "Your highest actions" (II 570).

However unlike Hall's justification for the episcopal order through the same rhetorical modes, behind Milton's rhetorical strategies of negotiation with Parliament is the deeper, more nuanced criticism of illegitimate censorship which was exercised in the name of civil power, and, even more seriously, was based on the reintroduction of repressive measures characterized as a traditionally conservative censoring system. Milton's criticism of the illegitimate censorship by the civil power shows how the modes of classical rhetoric serve as a means of delegitimation. This is antithetical to Hall's objective in his tract. Another important difference between Milton's *Areopagitica* and Hall's tract is that *Areopagitica* reveals an adequate fusion between his arguments against the legitimacy of the Licensing Order and the figurative devices harnessed to magnify the effects of the

arguments. From this perspective, argumentative discourse and figurative language in *Areopagitica* do not clash with each other, as Kendrick and Cable have argued, but they form a crucial partnership in the ideological function of implicitly justifying Milton's opposition to, and criticism of, the Parliament's Licensing Order.

Milton begins with figurative language just before he introduces his first argument. He tries to liken books to "malefactors", "Dragons teeth" and "armed men" (II 492) in his use of tropes and figures such as simile and personification. This comparison of books to criminals and soldiers is an allusion to his political awareness that books might be used as an ideological instrument for royalist propaganda and to his approval of the need to "have a vigilant eye" (II 492) on such books. Nevertheless, the problem with Parliament's licensing policy, in Milton's view, is that it does not limit the scope of its application to royalist books, but extends to suppressing what he counts as "a good Book" (II 492):

And yet on the other hand, unless warinesse be used, as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book; who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, Gods Image; but he who destroys a good Booke, kills reason it selfe, kills the Image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great losse; and revolutions of ages doe not oft recover the losse of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole Nations fare the worse. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of publick men, how we spill that season'd life of man preserv'd and stor'd up in Books; since we see a kinde of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kinde of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that ethereall and fift essence, the breath of reason it selfe, slaies an immortality rather then a life.

(II 492-43)

Here Milton does not specify what belongs to the category of what he thinks of as “a good Book” or who is to blame for suppressing the good book in 1644. But we could infer that it is referring to books containing radical political and religious ideas, specifically books relating to the ideas of the Independents and sects under Parliament’s control in the immediate licensing controversy. For, in the controversial context of licensing in 1644, Milton could not have imagined as “a rejected truth” either a royalist cause or a Presbyterian one. However, his intentional silence on Parliament’s responsibility for the suppression of books and even his identification with the dominant power through the use of “we”, as David Aers and Gunther Kress point out, can be seen as part of “a sensible tactical move” (296). Milton assumes, as they note, that he “understands the practices of the group he addresses and is one of them, sharing their values, aspirations and difficulties, therefore unlikely to be advocating against their (our!) real interest” (296). Milton’s assumption, however, should not be taken at face value; his identification with parliamentary interest through the use of “we” is seen as an attempt at shrewd, rhetorical negotiation with Parliament. This rhetoric of negotiation with Parliament in *Areopagitica* is, in a sense, dialectically related to his implied criticism of press censorship. The above passage - “revolutions of ages doe not oft recover the loses of a rejected truth” - indicates the general phenomenon that a rejected truth is not fully recovered even in times of historical change. His tacit criticism is that this specific time of change in English history is a far cry from the recovery of the “rejected truth”, given Parliament’s operation of the conservative licensing system and its repressive implications against a free press and free expression. Milton’s allusion to, and criticism of, the repressive character of this parliamentary measure are represented in the metaphor of the killing of a man, used to imply the suppression of books. And the effect of the metaphor is gradually strengthened

both in similar emphatic metaphors - “homicide”, “martyrdome” and “massacre” and in its contrasting images of the possibility of the life and immortality of “a good Book”.

Thus, for Milton, figurative language functions as a rhetorical means of justifying his opposition to the “project of licensing” (II.493) and its related unvoiced disapproval of current rulers, and the very next passage, which introduces his first argument, shows his awareness of this:

But lest I should be condemn'd of introducing licence, while I oppose Licencing, I refuse not the paines to be so much Historicall, as will serve to shew what hath been done by ancient and famous Commonwealths, against this disorder, till the very time that this project of licencing crept out of the *Inquisition*, was caught up by our Prelates, and hath caught some of our Presbyters. (II 493)

Milton tries to appear to be far from critical or offensive, to be totally objective when presenting historical examples of licensing in his first argument. But “Milton’s history of the banishment of authors, censorship, and licensing of books”, as Mary Ann McGrail points out, is “selective” (102). This selective appropriation of historical proofs testifies to the fact that his arguments and their proofs are artfully structured in such a way as to delegitimize Parliament’s licensing policy and, at the same time, to legitimate his opposition to it, just as when he depends on figurative discourses for the same purposes.

Milton’s account of historical examples of censorship shows his intention subtly to criticize the severity and partiality of the current civil power’s licensing policy. According to Milton, in Athens and Rome only two types of writing - blasphemous/atheistic writings and libelous writings - were suppressed by the civil powers, and other writings were free from the state’s censorship: “Except in these two points, how the world went in Books, the Magistrat kept no reckning”

(II 498). Furthermore, Milton asserts that in Rome, even a book upholding the position of a political opponent was not suppressed by the ruler: “And for matters of State, the story of *Titus Livius*, though it extolled that part which *Pompey* held, was not therefore suppressed by *Octavius Caesar* of the other Faction” (II 499). There is an implicit assumption in these arguments that whereas the civil powers in Athens and Rome took relatively tolerant positions with regard to censorship of books, the English Parliament representing the current civil power is operating a strict licensing policy applying censorship to almost all fields. Milton is also critical of the fact that the parliamentary Licensing Act is being used as a means to suppress the ideas of politically different positions, when compared with the Roman licensing policy that took a tolerant attitude toward such ideas. Milton’s critique of the implications of the 1643 Licensing Order is further reinforced as he tries to compare the law to the severe Spanish Inquisition and to the episcopal licensing policy by association and imagery.

The reason why Milton is so critical of Parliament’s Licensing Order of 1643 stems from the perception that despite the changed political situation in which royal-episcopal power has been replaced by parliamentary power, the civil power is just following “an old canonicall slight” (II 541). The civil power, in Milton’s view, fails to pay serious regard to “the peoples birthright and priviledge” (II 541) to express their opinions freely and publish them in public. Milton here calls into question the power’s validity to determine production, circulation and consumption of discourse by blocking the right of the private subject freely to access the press. For Milton, the right of the private subject is not something that is subjected to the state power as practiced in the former regime, but it should be redefined as the exercise of the people’s privilege. This viewpoint insinuates that Milton attempts to review the relationship between power and the

right of the subject in a new light. In other words, the possibility of the right of the subject to freedom of opinion, Milton argues, should be expanded so that power is less involved in this right, or only helps to increase the right. Milton's critique of the 1643 Licensing Order conveys a tacit warning of Parliament's inability to redefine the relationship between the two in a new sense, differentiated from that of the former regime.

The tacit criticism of Parliament's printing policy turns into a voiced but circumlocutory remonstrance against it, when Milton assesses the extent of the damage the Licensing Order has done to the liberty of printing and learning: "liberty of Printing must be enthral'd again under a Prelaticall commission of twenty, the privilege of the people nullify'd, and which is wors, the freedom of learning must groan again, and to her old fetters; all this the Parliament yet sitting" (II 541-42). Milton raises the question of the harmful impact of Parliament's control of printing on the freedom of learning as an important issue in the fourth part of his four-part argument. It is significant not just because the fourth argument constitutes more than half of the tract. Rather, its significance lies in the ways in which the combination of his argument with figurative language as a means of strengthening the argument is deployed to refute the legitimacy of Parliament's Licensing Order. In the fourth argument, Milton professes direct criticism of the Stationers' arguments and indirect dissatisfaction with Parliament's approval of the arguments. Milton contends that the Licensing Order is "the greatest discouragement and affront, that can be offered to learning and to learned men" (II 530). This argument has much to do with his confutation of the Stationers' logic of legitimation for the Licensing Order (*Milton Studies* 36). When the Stationers' Company pleaded with Parliament for the necessity of a severe Licensing Order in the petition, *To the High Court of Parliament: The Humble Remonstrance of the Company of*

Stationers (April 1643), its main claim was that “The first and greatest end of order in the Presse, is the advancement of wholesome knowledge,” and its second end is “not merely private” but “publike” (sig. [A1v]). In running sharply counter to the Stationers’ logic of legitimation, Milton tries to demonstrate how the Licensing Order serves as a stumbling block to the advancement of learning and to the pursuit of truth, and how it helps to propel private rather than public ends. For these arguments, Milton deploys various kinds of imagery and metaphor as a vehicle for supporting his case as well as performing the critical function of his opposition to the Licensing Order.

In order to show how harmful the Licensing Order is to “learning and to learned men” as a refutation of the Stationers’ first argument, Milton uses the image of a learned man as a schoolboy, the image of measurement and the metaphors of imprisonment, tyranny and gagging. The effect of the accumulation of these diverse images and metaphors is to highlight, in Milton’s words, how “much we are hinder’d and dis-inur’d by this course of licencing toward the true knowledge of what we seem to know” (II 548). The Licensing Order is not only a great obstacle to the discovery of true knowledge, but what is more problematic is that it is an institutional embodiment blocking the pursuit of truth. Just as he depends on a network of metaphors and images to emphasize the threat of the Licensing Order to the advancement of knowledge, Milton makes best use of the trope of truth to show how the Order could be harmful to the encounter with truth in process:

Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his Apostles after him were laid asleep, then strait arose a wicked race of deceivers, who as that story goes of the *AEgyptian Typhon* with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good *Osiris*,

took the virgin Truth, hewd her lovely form into a thousand peeces, and scatter'd them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the carefull search that *Isis* made for the mangl'd body of *Osiris*, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall doe, till her Masters second comming; he shall bring together every joynt and member, and shall mould them into an immortall feature of lovelines and perfection. Suffer not these licencing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyr'd Saint.

(II.549-50)

The trope of truth serves as the ruling metaphor in Milton's fourth argument in the sense that it incorporates his arguments on a logical as well as a figurative level. For Milton, the process of acquiring true knowledge is part of the process for arriving at truth. The harmful effect that the Licensing Order has on the growth of true knowledge, contrary to the Stationers' defence of the licensing, by extension also applies to the quest for truth. Here, the trope of truth as a dismembered body is used as a way of strengthening Milton's opposition to the Stationers' first logic of legitimation and Parliament's acceptance of the Stationers' petition. It is true that in Milton's use of the trope of truth, as Norbrook points out, there is "a tension between Truth as absolute and Truth as process", and "Milton's position is not at this point simply antinomianism, with personal truth transcending any institutional embodiment" (Norbrook, "*Areopagitica*" 23). But Milton's appeal to Parliament and his statement just after the trope of truth - "Suffer not these licencing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking" - show that he is using the trope as a figurative device for supporting his argument against the specific institutional embodiment of the Licensing Order. Here, there

is little doubt that he has in mind the Stationers' specious argument that the licensing contributes to "the advancement of wholesome knowledge" and his implicit criticism of Parliament's licensing policy.

Milton's refutation of the Stationers' second argument of legitimation is observed in his different metaphor of truth as a commodity: "Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopoliz'd and traded in by tickets and statutes, and standards" (II.535). The Stationers' argument that the aim of licensing is not for private interests but for "publike good" (sig. [A1v]) is seen by Milton to be no more than a gimmick of legitimation for sustaining their privileged monopoly of the press. By using the metaphors of "tickets and statutes, and standards," symbolic of the Stationers trading monopoly, and by making the point that truth should not be treated as a monopolized commodity, Milton tries to turn the Stationers' second argument for legitimation on its head. It is at this juncture that the crucial link between truth and the commercial metaphor is made so as to counter the Stationers' second argument.

In fact, Milton does not deny the figuration of truth as a commodity itself. As has been indicated in the phrase "it [licencing] hinders and retards the importation of our richest Marchandize, Truth" (II 548), Milton raises a question about the ways in which licensing obstructs free exchange and circulation of knowledge as a process of which truth is the end, just as the monopoly of the printing business by the Stationers hinders free trade and competition among stationers. Thus, the tropes of truth that are used in different ways in *Areopagitica* serve as a metaphor which in the first place incorporates his refutations to the Stationers' defence of the licensing. Yet further, the tropes of truth both as a dismembered body and as a monopolized commodity function as a central metaphor demonstrating how the Licensing Order prevents us from striving continually to attain to truth in process. The implication of the figuration of truth in *Areopagitica* is

that behind Milton's strong opposition to the Stationers' arguments for licensing is a more shadowy critique of Parliament which exchanged its political interests with the Stationers' economic interests and which was therefore responsible for frustrating the advancement of knowledge and the quest for truth. What is at stake in *Areopagitica* is that Milton's criticism of Parliament is at work in an ambiguous and oblique way. This is evidence that Milton's *Areopagitica* is a political pamphlet written during his complicated rhetorical negotiation with the dominant power in an attempt to delegitimize its acts. What is telling in *Areopagitica* is that this rhetorical strategy continues to the last *peroratio* in his complex message of covert warning to, and skilful eulogy of, Parliament: "to redresse willingly and speedily what hath bin err'd, and in highest authority to esteem a plain advertisement more then others have done a sumptuous bribe, is a virtue (honour'd Lords and Commons) answerable to Your highest actions, and whereof none can participate but greatest and wisest men" (II 570).

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Abstract

***Areopagitica* in the Licensing Controversy: Milton's Rhetorical Strategies and Modes**

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Milton's *Areopagitica* is widely known for its defence of a universal and absolute freedom of speech and of the press, but recent studies tend to disapprove its reading as a libertarian document supporting complete freedom of publication and expression. This article shares such a changed critical tendency regarding *Areopagitica*, but it is more concerned with Milton's rhetorical strategies and modes in the context of the licensing controversy which recent criticism has overlooked.

The licensing controversy of 1643-45 whose immediate occasion was Parliament's introduction of the Licensing Order in 1643 was related to a complex of multiple factors: the Stationers' Company's demand for Parliament's strict regulation of the press, Parliament's reintroduction of a stringent censoring machine aiming at suppressing the spread and circulation of radical ideas in its alliance with the Stationers' economic interests, conservative Presbyterians's support for Parliament's censorship and radical writers' criticism of the monopolistic and factional use of the press. Milton's *Areopagitica* written in such a political, economic and ideological context shows the characteristic rhetorical modes of classical deliberative and epideictic rhetoric and of a closely connected network of rational discourse and figurative language. Milton's artful orchestration of these modes derives from his complicated rhetorical strategies of negotiation with, and indirect criticism of, the Parliament which played a leading role in bringing back the conservative licensing

system in its alliance with the Stationers' Company. Behind the deployment of Milton's ingenious rhetorical modes and complex rhetorical strategies is his implicit criticism of the current civil power's inability to redefine the relationship between a ruling power and the private subject's right to freedom of the press and speech from a novel perspective.

Keywords: licensing controversy, Parliament, Stationers' Company, press censorship, rhetorical strategies and modes