The theme of exile and return percolates in various ways through the literature of seventeenth-century England and in some sense prepares the way for James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in terms of motifs such as wandering and alienation. Like so much of the literature of the West, this theme has two major sources in literary history, Homer and the Bible. The relevant Homeric elements here come, of course, from the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus struggles to return to Ithaca after the Trojan War. The biblical materials that contribute to the theme range from the first chapters of Genesis to accounts of exile and return in prophetic literature. These texts take on additional significance as a result of political, theological and literary developments in the early modern period.

The figure of Odysseus took on new shades of meaning after Homer had finished his version of what must have been an ancient oral tradition even in his time. W. B. Stanford’s masterful account of the Ulysses theme from Homer through the twentieth century provides a detailed history of the shifts that entered into the story after Homer.1 Most significant for the developing myth of Ulysses as a questing wanderer in search of knowledge was the ambivalent rendition of Dante who situated Ulysses deep in the lower levels of Hell. In the *Inferno*, the Greek hero explains that nothing ‘was able to defeat in me the longing / I had to gain experience of the world’. He tells of urging his crew ‘to be followers of worth and knowledge’ as they sailed westward into the Atlantic, only to be shipwrecked off the coast of what was probably meant to have been the mountain of Purgatory.2 This longing for knowledge and experience was simultaneously heroic and evil for

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Dante. Ulysses has great appeal even as his desire to know borders on the irreligious. Dante admired the bravery of the hero even as he was clearly horrified by him. The attractions of this intellectual adventure carry Ulysses away from his home into what eventually becomes a perpetual exile in Hell with no hope of return.

The biblical aspects of this archetypal figure are less obvious. The theme begins clearly enough with the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. This establishes the entire world as a place of exile. Abraham refocuses the geographical world once he receives the command to leave his place of birth and go to a land that God will show him: Canaan. From there he and his progeny constantly travel to and from the ‘Promised Land’. Jacob flees his brother and homeland but eventually returns. Egypt with its fertile Nile valley is a constant attraction. In one way or another, Abraham, Jacob and his sons are drawn there only to return generations later. After the establishment of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel speak of exile and return as a recurring motif in their prophecies.3

The cyclic nature of this motif is significantly reshaped in linear terms by Christianity. Instead of the prophecies of temporal exile and ultimate return in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament (most significantly expressed in the Revelation of John) envisions a final apocalypse in which the world as we know it will be changed completely. The vision is linear in that it considers time as moving toward a final conclusion that will bring an end to life on earth. Christianity universalizes Hebraic messianism, which is primarily about the coming of an ideal king who will return the people out of exile and establish an endless reign of peace and goodwill in the Promised Land. Once this land is Christianized as heaven in the world to come, the cyclic Hebraic vision becomes primarily linear.

In late antiquity and the Middle Ages, the relation between the particularism of Jewish messianism and the universality of Christianity became complicated in light of a shared interest in the future appearance or second coming of the Messiah. Jews longed for the coming of the Messiah and many speculated in mystical terms as to when he would

3 For example: Isaiah 35.10, 51.11; Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 11.17 ff.
appear. Christians were no less interested but understood their search to concern the time of the second coming of Jesus. When the Jews worked out mystical traditions that tried to predict the coming of the Messiah, some Christians became convinced that these methods could help them determine the time of the second coming. Jewish mysticism thus received intense attention on the part of Christian Kabbalists such as Pico della Mirandola, who sought to find the Christian ‘truths’ behind Jewish texts and practices. This meant that throughout the early modern period there was a great deal of interest on the part of some Christians in Jewish lore.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was a cultural tendency to interpret Homer and the Bible as part of a spiritual continuum that Christianity could explain. This was the focus of the Christian humanists who saw the classical world as providing glimpses of Christian truth. This tendency was quite explicit with regard to the Ulysses theme in George Chapman’s famous translation of the Odyssey. Early in his version of ‘The First Booke’, Chapman explained in a marginal comment that ‘This is thus translated the rather to expresse and approve the Allegorie driven through the whole Odysses – deciphering the intangling of the wisest in his affections and the torments that breede in every pious minde, to be thereby hindred to arrive so directly as he desires at the proper and onely true naturall countrie of every worthy man, whose haven is heaven and the next life, to which this life is but a sea in continuall aesture and vexation’. He saw the entire Odyssey as an allegory about every worthy man’s struggle to reach heaven in the world to come and in so doing subverted the motif of the cyclic return of Odysseus to Ithaca into a linear pilgrim’s progress. This subversion was part of the approach to the theme throughout the early modern period in Europe in general and in England in particular.

Tensions between cyclicity and linearity helped shape the ways in which poets such as Shakespeare and Milton treated their versions of the motif of the questing and returning wanderer. The Tempest and Paradise Lost address problems concerned with the human quest for knowledge about the secrets of nature as well as questions of redemption.
and its relationship to mortality. In addition, the negativity of alienation from normal society was not irrelevant to the ways in which these poets portrayed their real and imagined worlds. Their works grew out of a culture that had frequent recourse to the texts and ideas of Jewish and Christian mystics on quests of their own.

Homer and biblical aspects of the solitary wanderer in search for truth and knowledge can be seen in the career of Shakespeare’s older contemporary, the sixteenth-century English scientist and philosopher, John Dee. Learned in science and the occult, Dee held a liminal place in the court of Elizabeth. On the one hand he seems to have had a number of personal contacts with the queen. On the other, he undertook a spiritual journey akin to that of Dante’s Ulysses as he sought out hidden knowledge in his travels back and forth between Britain and Europe. His trips helped him put together a huge library which he often made available to his contemporaries. Nevertheless, his lonely wandering quest made him a liminal inside-outsider at Elizabeth’s court. Trusted yet darkly suspected, he was neither fully accepted nor embraced by his society even though he was highly respected in many areas.

Dee’s liminality can be seen on a biographical level in terms of a recurring Ulysses motif. Like Homer’s Odysseus he journeyed from one place to another filled with a desire for new experience and like Dante’s Ulysses his primary aim was to seek out new knowledge. As a young man he left England to travel on the continent in search of knowledge and experience. From 1548-1551 his travels took him from one center of learning to another and he met with leading scientists and won the recognition and admiration of some of the best known scholars in Western Europe. Wherever he went he acquired books and manuscripts that reflected a broad range of intellectual views and ideas that were just beginning to reach England. Although such travel was quite normal for sixteenth-century gentlemen, Dee was apparently much more intellectually at home than most Englishmen as he traveled from one European center of learning to another. He met some of the leading intellectuals of his time and formed lasting bonds with many. As he traveled he purchased numerous books and manuscripts. These reflect a widening of his interests from the Latin and Greek classics that dominated his collection during his university training at St. John’s
College, Cambridge in the early 1540’s, to the new works about science and mathematics that he acquired in Louvain, Brussels and later on in Paris.

As Dee moved from one community to another he felt a great kinship with the Europeans he met. At the same time he was careful to maintain a commitment to return to England. He eventually claimed to have received invitations from five different European rulers each of whom wanted him to become a kind of court philosopher and receive a sizable stipend which would have allowed him to continue his studies in comfort. He rejected all of these offers in order to return to England. At the same time he hoped that the English monarch would make him a similar offer. Although Elizabeth often promised him positions that might have relieved some of his material difficulties, she did little more than offer very occasional financial assistance. For his part, Dee often provided the kind of intellectual services that his notion of a court philosopher would have required. He suggested to Queen Mary that it would be wise to collect the many manuscripts that had been left to rot after her father’s dissolution of the monasteries. When she declined to support such a project, Dee took it upon himself to do so as a private citizen and eventually amassed a huge private library of manuscripts and books at his home in Mortlake. He then made his collection (including archives of various kinds) available to his contemporaries. At the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign it was Dee who worked out a detailed horoscope for the new queen in order to determine the most auspicious day for her coronation. That is, Dee was a respected figure in Elizabeth’s court even though he was never sure of his position and was often quite impecunious.

Dee’s European travels continued after his return to England in 1551. Although his longest and most famous journey was to Eastern Europe in the 1580’s when he was away from Britain for five years, he was also in the Low Countries from 1562-64 and in France in 1571. Like his earlier trips he was still in search of experience and knowledge

5 Compare B. Woolley’s suggestion: ‘It may have been loyalty to his homeland, and a heartfelt hope – indeed a presumption – that its sovereign would one day extend to him the privilege Charles V [and others] had so generously offered’. *The Queen’s Conjurer: The Science and Magic of Dr. John Dee, Adviser to Queen Elizabeth I*, New York 2001, p. 21.
but this time his emphasis was less on the recovery of texts such as books and manuscripts and more concerned with the recording of angelic communications.

This consultation with spirits endangered Dee on a variety of levels. His spiritual and scientific interests had always awakened the fears of some of his contemporaries. While a reader in Greek at Cambridge he had produced *Peace* by Aristophanes and had found ‘a way of bringing … [a] giant dung beetle to life’ so that ‘the creature leapt from the stage’.6 Dee had evidently used springs, pulleys and wires to make it appear as if a magical scarab was actually flying. The production had been so successful that some of the audience was convinced that Dee had used black magic to produce the effect.

Years later, when Edward Kelley, a remarkably resourceful younger man, convinced Dee of his ability to see and hear the angels that Dee invoked, the two embarked on a bizarre series of weekly recording sessions that continued for many years both at Dee’s home in Mortlake and on the trip to Eastern Europe. Dee recorded the visions that Kelley claimed to have seen and heard. He described most of these sessions in his diaries which have been recently published.7

Dee’s quest for angelic knowledge was a source of great satisfaction for him even as it involved great risk. The danger, of course, was the threat that his ‘angels’ would turn out to be ‘devils’. For Dee, science and mysticism were different aspects of the same unity and this is something that he stressed whether his immediate concern was with a preface to Euclidian geometry or with an account of the wisdom of Enoch.

All this, of course, made Dee a figure who was simultaneously respected and feared. Elizabeth consulted with him throughout her life but her ministers were often less than willing to help Dee cement his position and influence in real political and economic terms. When various items were stolen from his library during his Eastern European

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6 Compare Woolley: ‘Dee’s coup de théâtre had its intended effect. A “great wondering” spread through the audience. Dee left no clue as to how he actually made his creature fly around the stage, but the mechanisms mentioned in his “Praeface” include pneumatics, mirrors, and springs. He also wrote a paper on the use of pulleys’ (p. 14).

journey in the 1580’s, Dee had much difficulty recovering the many books, manuscripts and valuable scientific instruments he had collected for his work on navigation. Elizabeth promised to help but in the end Dee had to manage on his own. By the last decade of his life he was in difficult financial straits and had to deal with the Jacobean court which was much more suspicious of his spiritual endeavors than Elizabeth had been.

Dee ended his life as a near beggar in his own land. Kelley remained in Eastern Europe where he was knighted and amassed considerable wealth before being arrested and executed. Back in England, Dee had neither the success nor the precipitous fall of his former ‘medium’. Despite his belief that he had communicated with angels, none of these intervened on his behalf so that Dee died near the end of his Odyssean quest, more like an exile and a beggar than a triumphant magus.

This incomplete Odyssean pattern that describes the life of John Dee should not obscure the brilliance of the many intellectual and spiritual triumphs that make his work significant for us. Dee’s search for knowledge was a special kind of Ulysses theme. His values certainly identifies him as a Dantesque Ulysses. He claimed that as an undergraduate he studied eighteen hours per day. The many books that he acquired during the period of his university education are filled with his notes. Whether his search involved him in the study of mathematics, navigation, mining or astronomy he saw these as aspects of divine creation which he sought to understand.

Dee’s prose emphasizes his unified philosophic vision by treating worldly issues and problems as an aspect of mystical or theological wisdom. His Mathematicall Praeface to the Elements of Geometrie of Euclid of Megara, one of his most widely read publications, is primarily about the nature of mathematics and geometry. At the same time, however, he situates these sciences in philosophical and spiritual terms. Near the outset of his preface he sets up the terms of his discourse with care:

All things which are, & haue beyng, are found vnder a triple diversitie generall. For, either, they are demed Supernaturall, Naturall, or, of a third being. Thinges Supernaturall, are immateriall, simple, indivisible, incorruptible, & vnchangeable.
Things Naturall, are materiall, compounded, diuisible, corruptible, and chaungeable. … By which properties & comparisons of these two, more easily may be described, the state, condition, nature and property of those thinges, which, we before termed of a third being: which, by a peculier name also, are called Thynges Mathematicall. For, these, beyng (in a maner) middle, betwene thinges supernaturall and naturall: are not so absolute and excellent, as thinges supernatural: Nor yet so base and grosse, as things naturall: But are thinges immateriall: and neutertheless, by materiall things hable somewhat to be signified.8

Although Dee’s conception of mathematics as a middle ground between supernatural and natural may surprise us, his meaning is clear and a part of his struggle to seek and work out the precise nature of divine creation.

Towards the end of his preface to Euclid, Dee discusses a series of what he designates as Methodicall Artes. His description of Astronomie (an Arte Mathematicall) includes an account of the mathematical distances between the earth and the sun and the moon. Into the midst of this almost technical summary of ‘facts’ Dee interjects the following ‘Note to establish the spiritual nature of his search’:

So thicke is the heauenly Palace, that the Planetes haue all their exercise in, and most meruailously perfourme the Comma[n]dement and Charge to them giuen by the omnipotent Maiestie of the king of kings. This is that, which in Genesis is called Ha Rakia. Consider it well….Now if you may well with your selfe but this litle parcell of frute Astronomicall, as concerning the bignesse, Distances of Sonne, Mone, Sterry Sky, and the huge massines of Ha Rakia, will you not finde your Consciences moued, with the kingly Prophet, to sing the confession of Gods Glory, and say, The Heauens declare the glory of God, and the Firmament [Ha Rakia] sheweth forth the workes of his handes.9

8 John Dee, The Mathematicall Praeface to the Elements of Geometrie of Euclid of Megara (1570), New York 1975, sig. ☞ iijv.

9 Dee, sig. b.ijr.
Dee was likewise akin to Odysseus in his condition as an alienated, wandering exile and in the textuality with which he inscribed his understanding of the world. The issue of exile must have been relevant for him during some of his travels, especially in the 1580’s when he may have suspected that his enemies in England were plotting against him and forcing him to stay abroad. However, this aspect of the Ulysses theme concerned much more than physical wandering. It was connected to Dee’s deepest mystical yearnings for angelic communication and heavenly knowledge.

It was also linked to another aspect of early modern science, the attempt to know and change the world through manipulation of holy texts. Like other humanist philosophers such as Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, Dee believed in the efficacy of Jewish mystical practices generally known as Kabbalah, the Hebrew term for tradition. Christian Kabbalists understood the Jewish texts in explicitly Christological terms and thus tried to avoid accusations of heresy. Dee owned a number of Hebrew books but apparently stayed away from the extremely difficult classical texts of Kabbalah such as the Zohar. He probably relied on the translations and paraphrases of scholars like Pico who had expert guidance in his Hebrew readings.

Dee suffered throughout his life from popular misunderstandings of his work that often took the form of accusations about conjuring and the practice of black magic. As early as 1570 he complained (in his ‘Preface’ to Henry Billingsley’s English translation of Euclid): ‘And for these, and such like marueilous Actes and Feates, Naturally, Mathematically, and Mechanically, wrought and contriued: ought any honest Student, and Modest Christian Philosopher, be counted, & called a Coniuror?’10 In the early seventeenth-century he unsuccessfully attempted to get King James to allow him to clear his name in court.

In any case, Dee relied more on supernatural assistance for his spiritual needs: his conversations with angels (through the medium of Edward Kelley) provided him with the source for his Enochian Evocation. The opening section of this strange work suggests an important link to the exilic alienation that underlies so much of Dee’s

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work. The Evocation begins with a rehearsal of the Genesis account of the Fall:

Man, in his creation, being made an Innocent, was also authorized and made partaker of the Power and Spirit of God. …

But Coronzon (for so is the name of that mighty devil), envying man’s felicity, and perceiving that the substance of man’s lesser part was frail and unperfect in respect to his purer essence, began to assail man, and so prevailed. By offending so, man became accursed in the sight of God, and so lost both the Garden of Felicity and the judgement of his understanding, but not utterly the favor of God. But he was driven forth (as your scriptures record) unto the Earth which was covered with brambles.

Adam received punishment for his offence, in that he was turned out into the earth. … But in the same instant when Adam was expelled, the Lord gave unto the world her time, and placed over her Angelic Keepers, Watchmen, and Princes.\(^\text{11}\)

Before moving into the main discussion of the ‘Wisdom of Enoch’, however, Dee’s Evocation turns to the issue of language. Since Adam’s knowledge of God and the world is intimately connected to the specific words used, Dee is very concerned with the literal nature of the speech in which Adam received his communications. For example, he wants to know exactly which terms Adam used to name the animals and things he encountered. The first chapter thus has a short passage on ‘The Origin of Hebrew’. An angel informs Dee that ‘Adam began to learn (through necessity) the language which thou callest Hebrew but not in the form which is now Hebrew amongst you. … Hebrew is not of that force that it was in its original dignity. … In this [original] language, the power of God must work and wisdom in her true kind must be delivered’.\(^\text{12}\) The next chapter tells of the wisdom of Enoch to whom was granted divine understanding about the nature of the world. He records his knowledge but later generations ‘waxed wicked &


\(^{12}\) Dee, The Enochian Evocation, p. 2.
became unrighteous’ and then ‘those that were unworthy began to read. And the kings of the earth said thus against the Lord: What is it that we cannot do, & who is he that can resist us?’ As a result God sends ‘150 lions, spirit of wickedness, error and deceit’ which ‘began to counterfeit the doings of God and His power’.13 Much of the rest of the book consists of the angel Raphael’s revelation of the original Hebrew and Enoch’s mystical secrets to Dee and his medium, Kelley.

For Dee this revelation was a means of recovering spiritual secrets about the world. It appears that he had hopes of overcoming his exilic condition and becoming much less liminal as a result of these revelations. Although these hopes remained elusive, the experiments with angelic language and communication aligned his thinking with other Kabbalists who tried to read the book of nature in terms of a Hebrew text whose letters were thought to contain the key to understanding and controlling God’s creation. While Dee never realized much material advantage from this work, he continued to believe in the importance of his angelic conversations.14 Those who see Shakespeare’s Prospero as modeled to some extent on Dee might suggest that the triumph of the magus of The Tempest is a literary reworking of some of Dee’s favorite ideas.15

What historical events denied the man, dramatic art would make possible on the stage.

Shakespeare’s Tempest presents an idealized Dee who fulfills an Odyssean pattern of successful theurgic return complicated and in some sense undercut by a concern with mortality. Prospero is exiled by his brother from his dukedom of Milan whence he is able to escape to an island along with his infant daughter Miranda. Near the beginning of the play Prospero explains to her something of their history:

This King of Naples, being an enemy
To me inveterate, hearkens my brother’s suit,
Which was that he, in lieu o’ th’ premises
Of homage, and I know not how much tribute,
Noam Flinker

Should presently extirpate me and mine
Out of the dukedom and confer fair Milan,
With all the honours, on my brother. Whereon -
A treacherous army levied - one midnight
Fated to th’ purpose did Antonio open
The gates of Milan and i’ th’ dead of darkness
The ministers for th’ purpose hurried thence
Me and thy crying self.16

Among the few precious items he has managed to take with him to the island are books which enable him to continue his studies of magic. Prospero, with the aid of the spirit Ariel, struggles throughout the play to return to Milan (and his dukedom) and is akin to Odysseus whose quest to regain control of his island Ithaca is supported by the goddess Athena.

The biblical aspect of The Tempest is connected to Dee’s quest for angelic communication. Prospero’s struggle is simultaneously material and spiritual. He presents the inextricable bonding of these two aspects of existence. His magic allows him to control the material world and this power is based on knowledge that he extracts from his books. Prospero as magus can be seen as an idealized version of John Dee. The knowledge he seeks concerns the secrets of nature which he discovers by reading. He can thus be understood to have been a reader of mystical texts which he assumed could provide adepts with the ability to communicate with heavenly spirits and thus control the cosmos. This is just what he does with Ariel in the course of the play.

The nature of this ‘spirit’ is, however, not entirely clear. His name is Hebrew and appears a few times in the Hebrew Bible where it is apparently derived from words meaning either ‘lioness of El [God]’ or ‘hearth of El’.17 The biblical passages in which the word appears reflect the duality of the traditions available to Shakespeare. In Isaiah 29 (1, 2, 7) it is used to refer to Jerusalem and in Ezra (8.16) it is the name of ‘a chief man among returning exiles’. These would appear to

be positive associations. On the other hand, in 2 Samuel (23.20) and 1 Chronicles (11.22) it refers to a Moabite (two Moabites?) killed by Benajah, son of Jehoiada, one of ‘the mighty men whom David had’ (2 Sam 23.8; 1 Chronicles 11.10). That is, Ariel is taken in these passages to refer to an enemy of Israel. Robert West culls various ancient and early-modern sources in which the name Ariel is used as part of his study of Milton. Among others, West cites the Christian Kabbalist Henricus Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim. Agrippa was ‘one of the most colorful intellectual figures of the early sixteenth century’ (according to Richard Popkin) and he referred to Ariel as the spirit of the earth. Milton would make him one of the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost* (cf. 6.371). All this is to say that Prospero’s ‘tricky spirit’ had an ambiguous reputation long before Shakespeare. His associations with Christian Kabbalah add to the potentially unsavory traditions that make Prospero’s project potentially formidable. The problem was to make use of the supernatural powers of this ‘angel’ without allowing this spirit of the earth to overwhelm the delicate balance between theurgy and piety in early seventeenth-century England. If John Dee was a model to some extent, it would have been crucial for Shakespeare to avoid the more scandalous aspects of the angelic communications.

With the potential dangers of theurgy as both inspiration and warning, Prospero’s efforts to regain his dukedom tap powerful forces to assist in his plans. The raw power of nature and the storm, the potential vagaries of the innocent love of Miranda and Ferdinand, as well as of the degrees of moral corruption in Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio (not to mention the more comical but hardly less dangerous subversion of Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano) all had to be managed artfully. The play works out these issues so as to avoid the darker underside of the energy unleashed by Ariel and the supernatural. As Prospero moves toward the realization of his quest, the tone is of gentle and gradual resolution of the frightening forces released earlier in the play:

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21 Shakespeare, 5.1.226 (see above, note 16).
... and in the morn
I’ll bring you to your ship, and so to Naples,
Where I have hope to see the nuptial
Of these our dear-beloved solemnized;
And thence retire me to my Milan, where
Every third thought shall be my grave. (5.1.307-12)

The conclusion in which Prospero retires to Milan (and Shakespeare to Stratford) reflects the realization of human struggle in the face of potentially destructive power that threatens all attempts to impose mythic closure and resolution on the human condition. Shakespeare’s play succeeds in presenting this by delicate indirection and balance as the heroic efforts of Prospero are understood to have been more potentially dangerous than might at first appear. The return of the magus to Milan completes the Odyssean circle but it is qualified by his words about preparing for the grave. That is, the successful completion of the circle in no way challenges the linearity of the human condition. Prospero remains a pious Christian as he contemplates his death with no apparent interest in continuing to use his knowledge to learn angelic secrets about the future.

The dangers of Prospero’s project developed with a vengeance as seventeenth-century England moved towards its Revolution, Commonwealth and Restoration. In terms of the Odyssey, Puritan England struggled to reach the shores of its notion of Ithaca through the violence of civil war and revolution. John Milton dedicated his eye-sight to the demands and needs of the new Commonwealth and even suggested a partial parallel between his efforts and Odysseus: ‘For although I should like to be Ulysses – should like, that is, to have deserved as well as possible of my country – yet I do not covet the arms of Achilles’.22 Milton regarded his efforts for the Commonwealth as public service and the defense of liberty and saw the defeat of Charles as a great spiritual victory. The intensity of his defense of the Commonwealth led, of course, to his misery after the Restoration.

The excitement of Milton and others of his persuasion led many to

wax eloquent in the celebration of liberty that anticipated the coming of an ideal world in the context of the second coming and the apocalypse. Some of these people saw a connection between their hopes and what Andrew Marvell ironically referred to as ‘the Conversion of the Jews’.

Some expected the Apocalypse in 1650 and this served to increase the numerous radical sects that spring up in the late 1640’s and early 1650’s. David Katz has discussed in detail the ways in which many Englishmen considered this issue and its practical relevance to the presence of actual Jews.

The biblical dimension of messianic anticipation and its connection to the activities of seventeenth-century Jews can be seen in Moses Wall’s English translation of Menasseh ben Israel’s *Hope of Israel*. Ben Israel’s book is a detailed plea for the readmission of Jews to England whence they were banished in the late 13th century. Its implicit argument concerns the belief that since the Jews must be ‘scattered through all the corners of the world’ before the time of Messianic redemption, they should be readmitted to England. His book, as translated into English by Moses Wall (a friend of John Milton) in 1652, is filled with expressions of hope of an imminent return of all Jews to their land. In his introductory address ‘to the courteous reader’, Menasseh ben Israel states: ‘I prove that the Ten Tribes never returned to the Second Temple, that they yet keep the Law of Moses, and our sacred rites; and at last shall return to their Land, with the two Tribes, Judah and Benjamin; and shall be governed by one Prince, who is Messiah the Son of David; and without doubt that time is near, which I make appear by divers things’. In his ‘Epistle Dedicatory’ to Parliament, he praises the English Revolution and expresses his hope

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24 For example, in 1614 Thomas Brightman wrote that the conversion of the Jews ‘is to be expected about the yeer 1650’ in a commentary on the Song of Songs published in Latin in 1614. For details, compare N. Flinker, *The Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature: Kisses of Their Mouths*, Cambridge 2000, p. 122.
27 Menasseh ben Israel, p. 102.
that this may lead to a state whereby ‘peace which is promised under the Messiah, may be restored to the world’. Wall emphasizes this in his own prefatory words in ‘The Translator to the Reader’: ‘for he [i.e. Menasseh] in his Epistle Dedicatory says, The whole world stands amazed at what the Parliament hath done; besides he cordially and openly owns the Parliament, who as far as I know never did him nor his Nation any further good then to pray for them; (though we hope and pray, that their favour may extend to realities, towards that people, to whom certainly God hath made many, and great Promises, and shortly will give answerable performances)’. 

Menasseh ben Israel and Wall articulated the intensity of messianic hope and fervor that characterized both English Puritans and Jews in the world of the early 1650’s. Even before the claims of Sabbatai Zevi in the 1660’s, Jewish messianic fervor had been increasing dramatically. The precise nature and degree of the anticipation of messianism by Kabbalah is not entirely clear and thus the subject of significant historiosophic disagreement. The monumental work on Jewish mysticism by Gershom Scholem has been effectively challenged by the no less brilliant project of Moshe Idel. Scholem sums up his chapter on Isaac Luria with the suggestion that Lurianic Kabbalah ‘may be described as a mystical interpretation of Exile and Redemption, or even as a great myth of Exile’. Idel is not so sure:

The Expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula was seen as structuring Lurianic Kabbalah’s particular interest in the questions of exile, messianism, and evil. We see here an obvious absorption of the implications of a historical event into the basic structure of a specific type of Kabbalah. Scholem’s proposal for explaining the characteristics of Lurianic Kabbalah was based on the assumption that this type of mystical lore included important conceptual innovations that had to be explained in

28 Menasseh ben Israel, p. 100.
terms of historical change rather than inner developments; moreover, it implied a neglect of the Kabbalistic material extant in the manuscripts. This approach seems also methodologically problematic; Lurianic texts never mention the Expulsion, nor are their innovative concepts of such magnitude that we must turn for an explanation of their source to issues totally absent in them.31

Idel does not take issue with the clear historical facts, however. He recognizes ‘the mass psychologies prevalent in the middle of the seventeenth century’ but claims that ‘Kabbalah, even Lurianic Kabbalah, had little to do with the[m].’32 Although it may not be valid to attribute Jewish messianic yearning to Kabbalah, it is certainly true that some Kabbalists intensely anticipated the coming of the Messiah and did so in terms of exile and redemption. Some wrote eloquently of the redemption for which they longed. In one well known Hebrew poem by a disciple of Isaac Luria, Solomon Halevy Alkabetz (c. 1500-c. 1580) the poetic speaker addresses his beloved, urging her to join him in going out to greet the Sabbath queen. The gendered differences become confused, however, as the beloved becomes somehow identified with the queen and with the Jewish people, while the male presence becomes increasingly like a Godly force anticipating messianic (and sexual) redemption. The poem becomes more and more intensely messianic as it progresses:

Let us go my beloved to greet the bride, to greet the Sabbath.
… You (f.) have been in the valley of tears long enough
He will have compassion for you.
Let us go …
Shake off the dust, arise, don the clothing of your glory, my people.
The son of Jesse the Bethlehemite is near, the redemption of my soul approaches.
Let us go …
Awake, awake, your light is coming, arise my light

32 Idel, p. 259.
Arise, sing a song, God’s honor is revealed in you!
Let us go …
You’ll not be shamed or dishonored. Why are you depressed
and upset?
The poor of my people will take shelter in you and the city will
be rebuilt on its ancient hill.
Let us go …
Those that oppress you shall be despoiled and all those who
would swallow you shall depart,
Your God will rejoice upon you as a groom upon his bride …
Let us go …

The motifs of yearning for the Messiah (‘the Bethlehemite is near’),
return from exile (‘the city will be rebuilt’) and biblical sexuality
(‘rejoice upon you as a groom upon his bride’) reinforce and extend
each other’s intensity. The final effect is overwhelmingly powerful.

This messianic fervor is likewise to be found in seventeenth-century
English texts. The proliferation of radical sects during the 1640’s and
1650’s testifies to a growing desire in some circles for an eschatological
solution to the difficulties of civil war, poverty and spiritual longing.
With the coming of the Restoration, men such as Wall and Milton
were devastated. Their hope and subsequent dismay parallels the
appearance of Sabbatai Zevi later in the decade (1666). *Paradise Lost*
provides Milton’s response to what Christopher Hill has called ‘the
experience of defeat’.

The optimism of Shakespeare’s blending of theurgy with artistry can be seen in the shaping of his final play. The enthusiasm of Menasseh ben Israel, Wall and Milton in their hopes for
the revolution, are carefully, almost traumatically revised in Milton’s
1667 epic. Exile and return have to be reconfigured.

*Paradise Lost* is on one level, an account of the loss of Eden. The
epic describes the fall of Satan and his followers, the ideal state of

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33 This poem has long been part of the Sabbath eve Jewish liturgy. My translation
presents a selection of the verses but preserves the original order.

34 Compare: Isaiah 62.5. Alkabetz clearly took his passage from Isaiah where
national redemption and return from exile are explicitly compared to the sexual
intimacy of a newly wed couple.

1984.
Odyssean Return and Literary Theurgy in Shakespeare and Milton

Adam and Eve in the Garden and then the catastrophic events of the Fall. It is, however, a commonplace of Miltonic criticism that despite its title, the poem is really about a Christian view of what some have called the ‘Fortunate Fall’. This understanding is delicately articulated in Book 12, the final section of the work. God the Father sends Michael to exile Adam and Eve from the Garden but He suggests that:

If patiently thy bidding they obey,  
Dismiss them not disconsolate; reveal  
To Adam what shall come in future dayes,  
As I shall thee enlighten, intermix  
My Cov'nant in the womans seed renewd;  
So send them forth, though sorrowing, yet in peace.37

Toward the end of Book 12 Michael concludes his account of future biblical events with Adam’s question about God’s reasons for promulgating so many laws:

This yet I apprehend not, why to those  
Among whom God will deigne to dwell on Earth  
So many and so various Laws are giv’n;  
So many Laws argue so many sins  
Among them; how can God with such reside?38

Michael explains that as a result of Adam’s sin ‘was Law giv’n them


38 Milton, p. 508 [12.280-84].
to evince / Thir natural pravitie.\textsuperscript{39} (287-8). He goes on to promise a kind of mythic return from the Edenic exile about to begin:

\begin{quote}
And therefore shall not \textit{Moses}, though of God
Highly belov’d, being but the Minister
Of Law, his people into \textit{Canaan} lead;
But \textit{Joshua}, whom the Gentiles \textit{Jesus} call,
His Name and Office bearing, who shall quell
The adversarie Serpent, and bring back
Through the worlds wilderness long wanderd man
Safe to eternal Paradise of rest.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

The return of ‘long wanderd man’ marks the conclusion of an important motif in \textit{Paradise Lost} that has dealt with ‘wandering’ and its Latinate corollary ‘error’ in various characters including Satan, Adam and Eve. This mythic return to Paradise imitates the Homeric patterns of Odysseus as well as the biblical example of Abraham whose epic task is to leave ‘his Gods, his Friends, and native Soil. … Not wandring poor, but trusting all his wealth / With God, who call’d him, in a land unknown’.\textsuperscript{41} That is, the pattern of exile from Paradise will be repeated in Homeric and biblical narratives which will, in turn, be finally resolved only with the bringing back of man to eternal Paradise either at the second coming or for each saved individual.

But at this point in Michael’s dialogical lesson to Adam, the Christian implications are not yet clear. The archangel proceeds with an account of biblical history as he telescopes the historical narratives of Joshua, Judges and Samuel:

\begin{quote}
Meanwhile they in thir earthly \textit{Canaan} plac’t
Long time shall dwell and prosper, but when sins
National interrupt thir public peace,
Provoking God to raise them enemies:
From whom as oft he saves them penitent
By Judges first, then under Kings; of whom
The second, both for pietie renownd
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{39} Milton, p. 509 [12.287-88].
\textsuperscript{40} Milton, p. 509 [12.307-14].
\textsuperscript{41} Milton, p. 505 [12.129, 133-4].
And puissant deeds, a promise shall receive
Irrevocable, that his Regal Throne
For ever shall endure; the like shall sing
All Prophecie, that of the Royal Stock
Of David (so I name this King) shall rise
A Son, the Womans Seed to thee foretold,
Foretold to Abraham, as in whom shall trust
All Nations, and to Kings foretold, of Kings
The last, for of his Reign shall be no end.42

This summary of biblical narrative leads up to a misleading conclusion. The reference to the king of whose ‘reign shall be no end’ is, like that to Joshua, typological. It looks forward to the Son and requires that the listener (Adam as well as readers) understand that the biblical language is metaphoric. Since this is not Adam’s immediate response, there is some irony as well as slippage here. On one level, at the end of Michael’s discourse Adam asks: ‘say where and when / Thir fight, what stroke shall bruise the Victors heel’.43 This literal expectation of a battle between Satan and the Son is rejected out of hand by Michael. This may not, however, have been entirely obvious to Milton or Moses Wall before 1650. That is, the way in which Michael’s discourse leads to a spiritual, personal solution for larger political questions may partially be the result of the Restoration. As long as Milton could hope that the Commonwealth might succeed, there was room for a literal battle between the forces of good and evil. Once Charles II returned, however, the revolution was over and Milton had to come to terms with the new (i.e. old) political reality.

His poetic solution was to internalize the process. Just as the political realities of the biblical period result in exile from the Promised Land, so would the process of exile and alienation be a necessary part of Adam’s fallen condition. The heady times of the revolution and the Commonwealth gave way to a world in which society’s unredeemed Idolatry was the order of the day just as it had been in ancient Israel:

42 Milton, pp. 509-10 [12.315-30].
43 Milton, p. 511 [12.384-5].
Noam Flinker

Whose foul Idolatries, and other faults
Heapt to the popular sum, will so incense
God, as to leave them, and expose thir Land,
Their citie, his Temple, and his holy Ark
With all his sacred things, a scorn and prey
To that proud Citie, whose high Walls thou saw’st
Left in confusion, Babylon thence call’d.
There in captivitie he lets them dwell
The space of seventie years, then brings them back,
Remembring mercie, and his Cov’nant sworn
To David, stablisht as the dayes of Heav’n.44

These details of the Babylonian captivity and return provide the kind of hope that nourished Menasseh ben Israel as well as Milton and Wall before 1660. The language of political salvation is, however, qualified by a phrase such as ‘the dayes of Heav’n’. The terms of the exile are much more bitter than the promise of redemption is sweet: ‘foul Idolatries’, exposure, scorn and prey are the qualifiers of the exile and its causes.

Michael’s discourse concludes with a series of internalized spiritual values that he urges Adam to cultivate:

This having learnt, thou hast attaind the sum
Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the Starrs
Thou knewst by name, and all th’ ethereal Powers,
All secrets of the deep, all Natures works,
Or works of God in Heav’n, Air, Earth, or Sea,
And all the riches of this World enjoydst,
And all the rule, one Empire; onely add
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith,
Add Vertue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,
By name to come call’d Charitie, the soul
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A Paradise within thee, happier farr.45

44 Milton, p. 510 [12.337-47].
45 Milton, p. 515-16 [12.575-87].
Michael thus concludes Adam’s education by explaining how he can prepare himself for a spiritual and internal Eden ‘happier farr’ than the Garden. There are, of course, ironies here. Presumably the Paradise within will be happier than the Garden after the fall, not before. In their fallen condition Adam and Eve are living in a place which reflects their alienated postlapsarian world. Michael’s instructions implicitly relate to Adam’s thirst for knowledge (similar, perhaps, to Ulysses in Dante’s *Inferno*) and counter this with a quest for deeds, faith, virtue, patience, temperance and charity.

Adam and Eve are to reach the shores of an interior Ithaca through biblical values of Christian humanity. In the face of the fall it would not be possible to realize the ideal Commonwealth for which Milton willingly gave up his eyesight. The messianic passion of Menasseh ben Israel, as Englished through the millennial commitments of Moses Wall (implicitly shared by Milton) was no longer an option in the 1660’s. This mood of disappointment at Jewish messianism (and its millenarian sympathizers) is accurately reflected in John Evelyn’s somewhat cynical account of the cataclysm of Sabbatai Zevi in 1666:

> According to the Predictions of several *Christian* Writers, especially of such who Comment on the *Apocalyps*, or Revelations, this Year of 1666 was to prove a Year of Wonders, of strange Revolutions in the World, and particularly of Blessing to the *Jewes*, either in respect of their Conversion to the *Christian* Faith, or of their Restoration to their Temporal Kingdome: This Opinion was so dilated, and fixt in the Countrys of the Reformed Religion, and in the Heads of Phanatical Enthusiasts, who dreamed of a Fift Monarchy, the downfall of the Pope, and Antichrist, and the Greatness of the *Jewes*: In so much, that this subtile People judged this Year the time to stir, and to fit their Motion according to the season of the Modern Prophesies; whereupon strange Reports flew from place to place, of the March of Multitudes of People from unknown parts into the remote Desarts of *Arabia*, supposed to be the *Ten Tribes* and *half*, lost for so many Ages. That a Ship was arrived in the Northern parts of *Scotland* with her Sailes and Cordage of Silke, Navigated by Mariners who spake nothing but *Hebrew*; with this Motto on their Sailes, *The Twelve Tribes of Israel*. These Reportes agreeing...
thus near to former Predictions, put the wild sort of the World into an expectation of strange Accidents, this year should produce in reference to the Jewish Monarchy.46

Milton avoided the ironic cynicism of Evelyn as Adam and Eve work out a more optimistic take on political and postlapsarian defeat. While they do yield to some tears and sadness, they accept their fallen and alienated condition and bravely join hands at the conclusion of Paradise Lost.

They looking back, all th’ Eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late thir happie seat,
Wav’d over by that flaming Brand, the Gate
With dreadful Faces throng’d, and fierie Armes:
Som natural tears they drop’d, but wip’d them soon;
The World was all before them, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow,
Through Eden took thir solitarie way.47

Paradise Lost ends where the Bible begins. The line from the Garden onward has been taken out of geographical space and reinterpreted in psychological terms. Adam and Eve prepare to live in their inner world while the rest of us are provided with a choice. The linearity that leads from Eden to Heaven remains an option that Milton could not negate. At the same time the domesticity that flows from the circularity of return remains another option.

The Odyssean shape of Shakespeare’s Tempest and Milton’s Paradise Lost thus look forward to the reversals of Joyce in his Ulysses. Wandering, the quest to return, and alienation are all to be found in these seventeenth-century texts just as they appear albeit changed and transformed in Joyce’s novel. The Christian linearity that subverted the circularity of The Tempest and Paradise Lost would become an ironic gesture in Joyce’s account of Bloomsday, 1904.