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Abstract. Tennyson's habits as a writer—composing longer works backward from a foreordained conclusion, stationing lyric speakers in a terminal situation—justify approaching his oeuvre as a poetry of aftermath. An obsession with the inevitable, which underlies his weaknesses in presenting character and in advancing narrative or dramatic action, also supports his compensatory strengths: evocation of atmospheric mood and sheer rhetorical splendor. Tennyson's rhetorical inevitability corresponds to intuitive convictions about the inevitability of the self's place in the world. His incapacity wholly to accept or resist the doom of the self engenders his typical melancholy; it also may explain the success he enjoyed as a Victorian spokesman. Never acquiring more than a fitful conceptual grasp of the fatality that was his subject, Tennyson conceived it instead in musical, often rhythmic, terms. He thus devised in "measured language" unsurpassed means of embodying and sharing the sense of a humanly definitive doom. (HFT)

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Abstract. A poet cannot help borrowing images and verse shapes from earlier poems. But in adapting Spenser's final hexameter, a major writer like Milton makes an apparently simple formal imitation the locus for revisionary strategies of a highly figurative nature. Spenser's own prosodic choices are always shadowed by larger tropes of time, death, love, and voice, as is evident both in the rhetorical effects that characterize the closure of the *Faerie Queene* stanza and in the elusive river and echo mythologies that inhabit the refrains of the poet's two marriage odes. These works, in turn, strongly influence Milton's early strophic poetry, especially the Nativity Hymn and the song to Echo from *Comus*. Milton reinvents the hexameter close in ways that point to his larger poetic ambitions, finding in that metrical scheme a space in which to reflect on, oppose, and translate the deep structures of Spenserian mythmaking. (KG)

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Abstract. Much of Kafka's fiction exploits language whose performative status is ambiguous—language that Paul de Man calls "rhetorical"—to generate a peculiar and characteristic narrative "space" in which Kafka's stories operate. Speech-act theory helps to clarify the way in which problems arising from language become the central problems that Kafka's characters face. In particular, the distinction between illocutions and perlocutions provides an analytic tool that reveals Kafka's abiding concern with the "gap," or "aporia," produced by assertions, requests, commands, and other illocutionary acts that turn out not to assert, request, or command anything the reader or listener can pin down. This tool helps us discover the linguistic sources for the bewilderment and anxiety that characterize Kafka's fictional world. (CK)

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