

If death  
Consort with thee, death is to me as life;  
So forcible within my heart I feel  
The bond of nature draw me to my own,  
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;  
Our State cannot be severed; we are one,  
One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself.

*Paradise Lost* IX. 954–59

The pathos of the lines which describe Milton's blindness when, in Book III of *Paradise Lost*, he prays for insight:

Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move  
Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird  
Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid  
Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus, with the year,  
Seasons return, but not to me returns  
Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,  
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;  
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark  
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men  
Cut off; and for the Book of Knowledge fair  
Presented with a universal blank  
Of Nature's works, to me expung'd and ras'd,  
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.

*Paradise Lost* III. 37–50

The anguish of Samson's cry is also Milton's:

O dark, dark, dark amid the blaze of noon,  
Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse  
Without all hope of day!

*Samson Agonistes* 11. 80–83

But the word we want for Milton is heroic. At a time, indeed on a night,\* when the New Zealand ethos is fairly summed up by the two words 'economy' and 'mini', it's worth recalling that 'economy' is simply the Greek word for house-keeping, whereas 'poetry'—from the verb *poiein*, to *make*—is what the Greeks meant by 'production'. And if you want an antonym for 'mini', my offer isn't 'maxi' but 'Miltonic'. The forces of Satan demand a matching verbal power, and few since Milton have commanded the epic armory needed to despatch, with deserved derision, the politically proud:

\* On the evening of 25 November, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Right Honourable Mr Robert Muldoon, introduced a supplementary finance bill popularly known as a 'mini budget'. (Ed.)