

*“Sense Variouslly Drawn”*  
*On Reading Paradise Lost*

In the tensions between sight and sound, between the horizontal and the vertical, and, as we shall see, between the narrative and the order of its telling, *Paradise Lost* hosts and describes an expansive plurality to which each reader potentially contributes. Joseph Wittreich calls *Paradise Lost* “a compendium of contradictory interpretations,”<sup>1</sup> which it is; But it is also made up thereby of material for further construction. The meanings are not simply a matter of choosing or selecting; rather, the contradictory possibilities sustain the creation of different readings. As Stephen Dobranski notes, “early modern readers were encouraged to intervene in their books to make them meaningful,”<sup>2</sup> and such participatory models of authorship and readership result in a “potential lack of control.”<sup>3</sup> That is, the interactive problem of how to read *Paradise Lost* thus represents the pluralistic variety (and the problem of pluralistic variety) the poem sets out to engage.<sup>4</sup> In the numerical poetics of *Paradise Lost*, the many are already potential in the one (of the verse), or at least in the readers’ varied interactions with it.

The poetry of *Paradise Lost* produces differences, through what Mary G. Fenton and Louis Schwartz call “generative ambiguity,” or what might more comprehensively be called its generative *ambiguities*.<sup>5</sup> At any given time, there are a series of possibilities, and all of those possibilities are available to anyone reading the poem. The productive interpretive design of *Paradise Lost* is part of its modernity. As Joanna Picciotto notes, “*Paradise Lost* attempts to reproduce through formal means the conditions of experimentalist insight.”<sup>6</sup> I begin discussing *Paradise Lost* with the problem of reading *Paradise Lost*, because what Milton’s epic offers to reading is central to the poem’s relationship to the experience of modernity.

With a 1668 printing of the first, ten-book edition, *Paradise Lost* initiates a pattern for Milton’s late poems—prose prefaces in which Milton highlights how each poem is organized, and thus presumably ways the poems should be read. *Paradise Lost* has “The Verse,” *Samson Agonistes* has “Of that sort of dramatic poem which is called tragedy,” and *Paradise*

*Regained*, which does not offer a prose preface, nonetheless establishes its own internal claim for being read differently from the other two poems (as I shall explore in Chapter 3). In the prose preface to *Paradise Lost*, "The Verse," while defining the "true musical delight" of poetry, Milton proposes three attributes of which he contends good poetry "consists": "apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse to another."<sup>7</sup> Some readers might treat Milton's list as redundant: Presumably, numbers represent quantities, and a fit quantity would equal the apt numbers. However, "apt numbers" are here arrayed against fit quantity, not only the fit against the apt, but also numbers against quantity, and an abstract set of numbers against the more specific concept of phonetic syllables.

Just getting the "right" number of syllables to fit in a line does not suffice for good poetry any more than a repetitive rhyme does; repeatedly hitting a target of ten does not determine good poetry (as can also be seen in Milton's revision of *Paradise Lost* from a ten- to a twelve-book edition). Rather, with "apt numbers," Milton is not only reminding us that good poetry entails rhythm at least as much as – and, he argues, more than – rhyme. He is also alerting readers to the attention we ought to pay to numbers more generally in *Paradise Lost*. The "apt numbers" might describe a combination of meter and rhythm, but the phrase is likely also informed by Milton's interest in classical and emerging mathematics. Mathematics pervade the poem, and, in the end, sometime after 1667, ten turns out not to be the apt number of books for the poem overall: In 1674, a twelve-book edition of *Paradise Lost* is published.

Milton's prefatory point – that good verse entails "sense variously drawn," a claim he makes for neither of the other late poems – can itself be drawn in various senses. On one level, lines of well-written poetry can offer various senses, or "meanings." However, "meaning" is only one understanding of "sense," a word that can itself be taken, or "drawn," in various senses. On another level, then, Milton's prefatory point highlights how good poetry engages several capacities of sensory awareness, or various senses. When Samuel Johnson argues that the poetry of *Paradise Lost* is "verse only to the eye,"<sup>8</sup> he is noting, rightly, the arrangement of the lines and line breaks; enjambment creates a tension between the horizontal reading of each line and the vertical reading of each sentence. An important part of verse, for *Paradise Lost* and for this chapter, is indeed verse for the eye. *Paradise Lost* involves a kind of "graphopoesis," what Richard Bradford calls "Milton's Graphic Poetics."<sup>9</sup> Thanks to enjambment, the vertical and the horizontal can be read in two ways; it is possible for the

meaning of the sentence to be opposed, subverted, or expanded by the meaning of the line.<sup>10</sup> The meaning of a sentence can change through its placement on a line, or its being broken up across lines. Depending on how one reads an enjambed line, different senses, or meanings, can be "drawn," or extracted, by different readers. The sense or meaning of a sentence or a line can be drawn "variously," and the eye is also "drawn," or led, from one line to the next, in a process Picciotto calls "ocular wanderings."<sup>11</sup>

Of course the visual sense is always engaged by reading printed poetry, but reading also involves other senses, too, such as hearing. As T. S. Eliot notes, "to extract everything possible from *Paradise Lost*, it would seem necessary to read it in two different ways, first solely for the sound, and second for the sense."<sup>12</sup> Eliot intends his comment as a complaint, but it is nonetheless the case that how a reader understands *Paradise Lost* depends on how the reader hears what they see. In a sense, so to speak, reading *Paradise Lost* involves listening to one's eyes, and seeing with one's ears – that is, having one's senses variously drawn out. When the narrator of *Paradise Lost* refers to the poem's "fit audience ... though few" (VII.31), Milton "stresses his poetry's aural qualities," as Dobranski points out.<sup>13</sup> Such a dynamic interaction between the visual and the auditory requires that *Paradise Lost* be read (or, as Eliot notes, reread). In fact, though, to extract, or draw, everything possible from *Paradise Lost*, one needs to read it at least three ways, at the same time – seeing it, reading it, and noticing tensions between what is seen and what is heard. Enjambment also highlights the difference between different senses – both different meaning and different sensory faculties. Readers can notice differences between the complete sentence they hear when they see that sentence broken into lines of poetry on the page, or between "the metrical segmentation and the semantic segmentation," in Giorgio Agamben's phrase.<sup>14</sup> In this case, though, the two ways of reading are not only Eliot's "sound" and "sense," but rather, again, the vertical and the horizontal, as the senses are drawn variously, left to right, and down. There is, then, another possibility in the poem's "apt numbers": the "various" ways in which the poem may be read, its "fit quantity."

The story told in *Paradise Lost* seems to be simple in its familiarity: Satan rebels against God, comes to Earth, tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and then she offers the fruit to Adam, who also partakes, after which God sentences both of them to different curses, and banishes them out of Eden. In Milton's telling, though, the story is at first 10 then ultimately 12 books (and roughly 10,000 lines) long, and layered with opposed possibilities, often in the same sentences

and lines. The devil, as they say, is in the details. The poem opens with an epic invocation of the muse at what turns out to be the middle of the story, Satan and his angels having fallen into the place “prepared / For those rebellious” (1.70–71); for the first two books, readers join the narrator and the fallen angels in Hell, during which there is a debate over how the angels ought to proceed. The story of *Paradise Lost* does not, however, follow the order of its occurrences (and so is always a process of rereading). The events that preceded Satan’s fall in Book 1 are recounted in Book VI; the beginning turns out to have been a midpoint, and the midpoint, the beginning. It is not until Book IV that readers – having followed Satan on a flight through the universe to the new planet, Earth – first meet Adam and Eve, at which point, the pair are discussing Eve’s memories of her first moments of existence. In Book V, Adam and then Eve awake and discuss what Adam claims is a dream; God sends Raphael with instructions to explain the threat that they face from Satan and from disobedience.

*Paradise Lost* is a poem dictated for print, spoken by an author then blind, exploring the layered visual and auditory possibilities of print (including rereading and retelling), and presuming sighted readers able to take in the sentential effects of visual line breaks. As Ann Baynes Coiro points out, *Paradise Lost* “bridges a historical divide between spoken and sight reading.”<sup>15</sup> The result is a poem whose productive ambiguities engage the reader in an experiment, with each doubling offering an experimental “control” against which readers’ hypotheses can be tested. All the meanings are there, and readers are left free to see the meanings that they do, but whether any reader will construe any particular meaning cannot be known. Like Eve, readers can separate off and decide for themselves what they think the words mean – making “continuous interpretive choices.”<sup>16</sup> The best way to enjoy *Paradise Lost*, then, and the only way to grapple with the fullest, surprising range of what it offers, comes through careful attention to the experience of reading it. As Stanley Fish suggested decades ago, “the true drama of this poem ... is to be found ... in the events occurring in the reader’s mind, and these are above all interpretive events where a reader must choose between various ways of interpreting scenes.”<sup>17</sup> *Paradise Lost* is, in this way, about the experience of reading itself, an experience not merely ending but actually culminating at the end of the twelfth book, which did not exist when *Paradise Lost* was first published.

“The freedom it allows its readers,” Coiro notes, “was unprecedented in English literary history.”<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, though, *Paradise Lost* comes to us today already read.<sup>19</sup> *Paradise Lost* is Christian; *Paradise Lost* is modern; *Paradise Lost* modernizes Christianity; *Paradise Lost* offers a “theodicy,”

justifying "why bad things happen to good people" (before Gottfried Leibniz came up with the former term or Harold Kushner wrote the later self-help book). *Paradise Lost* is also long, too long – "None ever wished it longer," as Johnson claims.<sup>20</sup> Today, *Paradise Lost* is also too old: Who has time to read a 10,000-line epic poem? Moreover, *Paradise Lost* also retells stories that its readers already know: Adam and Eve and Satan and God; the Creation of the universe, and the Fall of Man. *Paradise Lost* is orthodox Christianity, and Christianity is patriarchal, so *Paradise Lost* is patriarchal – foundationalist and essentialist. And Milton is "the first of the masculinists."<sup>21</sup> Yet it is precisely because it is so – and thus – well known, that *Paradise Lost* must be read. To get past what John Rumrich calls "the invented"<sup>22</sup> *Paradise Lost*, "it is necessary to read this poem yet once more."<sup>23</sup>

Be it "irony,"<sup>24</sup> "parody,"<sup>25</sup> "satire,"<sup>26</sup> "covert satire,"<sup>27</sup> or the "subversive,"<sup>28</sup> an established critical vocabulary addresses readers' experience of being surprised by the various senses of *Paradise Lost* – often by distancing Milton from his work, contravening the usual method. In each case, the implication is that Milton could not intend the alternative meaning, or, at least, he could not intend it directly. To his credit, William Poole invents a neologism, "paradoxographer,"<sup>29</sup> a word that restores intent to the many formal, semantic, and theological complexities of *Paradise Lost*. My argument, though, is that these paradoxes, ambiguities, subversions, incertitudes, ironies, and so forth are constitutive not only of the "poem itself" (as Peter Herman correctly claims), but also of modernity.<sup>30</sup> As what Herman calls "a poet of deep incertitude,"<sup>31</sup> Milton represents in *Paradise Lost* the experience of conflicting perceptions, opinions, choices, or options. By producing different readings, and revealing, thereby, differences among readers, the "various senses" of the verse and the recursive narrative of *Paradise Lost* represent and produce the *dissensus* of modernity itself. Given the different readings of the different readers, the communal, "collaborative"<sup>32</sup> experience of reading *Paradise Lost* models living with the uncertainties of modernity, living with difference itself, which is a negotiation between ourselves and those who think otherwise about the same thing. The differences spring from and add to the potential in the poem – a poem that "constantly and deliberately presents readers with choice," through the tension between the line and the sentence, the horizontal and the vertical, and between the various senses.<sup>33</sup>

Thanks to the poem's narrative anachronisms, readers of *Paradise Lost* are in a position to know more than Adam and Eve do, or at least to have a privileged perspective on their relationship, an additional view on

the already different experiences of the two human characters. Of course, those same reversals and retellings remediate crucial events, and can consequently obscure them. For example, the first line of *Paradise Lost*, "Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit," sets up a distinction between disobedience and the fruit. Conventionally, the fruit is the disobedience, insofar as eating the fruit violates God's only prohibition. However, *Paradise Lost*'s first line implies a first disobedience which is followed by the fruit. In this sense, eating the fruit is a consequence of man's first, and earlier, disobedience. From its very beginning, then, *Paradise Lost* puts readers on alert to search for that first disobedience – *man's* first disobedience.

The apparently subsequent, but actually recursive, narrative development of the poem both frustrates and repeatedly rewards conjecture regarding precisely what might constitute the first disobedience "of man." Could the eating of the fruit, the so-called Fall, itself be the fruit of an earlier disobedience, "man's first"? As Eve and then Adam tell their stories, out of chronological order, readers are offered several options for man's first disobedience – during their early moments together, in the morning of one of their early days, and, in Adam's conversation with Raphael, before Eve's arrival. Because these stories are told either twice or in reverse chronological order (or both), readers can only slowly and across the entire poem come to a full awareness of Adam's many possible disobediences. Over the course of the poem, the initial question "of man's first disobedience" gets pushed further and further back in time; as readers go forward in the poem's books, we travel backwards and hear Adam express assumptions and attitudes he has about Eve before she is even created.

For a poem that allows its readers unprecedented freedom, the extratextual concept of the Fall has a wonderfully distorting effect on the reception of *Paradise Lost*, informing a critical tradition that understands the earlier scenes between Adam and Eve as positive, maybe even ideal.<sup>34</sup> Dennis Danielson, for example, believes that in those early scenes Milton presents "a picture of how things could have been for mankind."<sup>35</sup> Danielson and others intend to refer to an idyllic prelapsarian situation, in which, they contend, Adam and Eve have a "yet sinless" (ix.659) and therefore good relationship: angelic visits, prepared meals, low-hanging fruit, and, crucially, the blissful bower. By following the metaphor – that is, after they eat the fruit (the act construed as the Fall), Adam and Eve drop down from their previously gracious heights – this pervasive way of thinking about the poem misses the powerful possibility that eating the fruit prompts for Adam and Eve a valuable reconsideration of their previous relationship. I share, that is, Danielson's sense that *Paradise Lost* shows what life would

have been like if the so-called Fall had not occurred, but I evaluate that situation very differently. Through Adam and Eve, Milton develops a psychological epic, before the emergence of the "psychological novel."<sup>36</sup> In it, readers are invited to evaluate an unchanged life in Eve's paradise: Would it have been bearable?

To pick up Danielson's question, and to take it more directly than he might have meant it, what, indeed, would it have been like to be chased, seized, and pulled into a bower a little after coming to consciousness? Carol Pateman's argument that "men's domination over women, and the right of men to enjoy sexual access to women is at issue in the making of the original pact" seems relevant to these scenes of Eve and Adam's first moments together.<sup>37</sup> Are readers looking at a swift succession from harassment, to assault, and then to rape in Adam and Eve's first technically prelapsarian moments together? Unlike Genesis, *Paradise Lost* provides enough detail to wonder. Of course, the argument goes, Adam and Eve are unfallen and sinless, so whatever happens between them is healthy and wholesome, which is the literary critical equivalent of Adam telling Eve that "Evil into the mind of God or Man / May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave / No spot or blame behind" (v.117–119). After Adam says that to Eve, though, she cries. Does not knowing good and evil make such a life better, as the metaphor of the Fall suggests? Or might it make it much worse, once one becomes aware? Readers, we postlapsarian readers, are presumed to know the difference between good and evil, and are invited, then, to reflect on whether we think what is happening before the Fall is good, even if technically sinless.

What is usually read in *Paradise Lost* as "the Fall" – Eve's separation and their eating the fruit – constitutes instead the means to a better relationship for Adam and Eve, a more equal relationship, one made possible by experimentation and disobedience. It is, in other words, the modernizing move, one that presses for equality, and thus, democracy (where a divine right monarch had ruled). Noticing those developments requires attention to Adam and Eve, whom John Guillory, for example, considers "relatively uninteresting as characters, as representations of people."<sup>38</sup> Given, though, that Adam and Eve are the *only* representatives of people in the poem until Book x, one wonders where else the human interest in the poem might reside. Historically, readers tend to focus on God and Satan, but Adam and Eve become particularly compelling once one moves beyond the story of, say, a personal relationship with divinity and/or the tantalizing frustrations of a fallen angel: There is an entire other poem focusing on humans as well, one toward which Sandra M. Gilbert directs readers in her

1978 *PMLA* essay "Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton's Bogey." With her powerful insight that *Paradise Lost* begins with a "story of woman's secondness, her otherness," as she puts it, the poem gains its political, psychological, and social import, not to mention its narrative development (away from Eve's secondness).<sup>39</sup>

This chapter focuses on a few scenes that testify either to the status of Adam and Eve's relationship or to their understanding of each other – their accounts of their first moments together (Book IV), their separation (Book IX), and their relationship at the end of the poem (Book XII). There are of course other important scenes that also relate to their eating the fruit (e.g., God's words in Book III, or Satan's speech in Book IX), but the focus here is on the relationship between Adam and Eve, for it is in their relationship that the response to modernity occurs, and, insofar as they are to be taken as representative humans, where it matters most. The situation between Adam and Eve improves in the books after Eve proposes working alone, or, in the books after they eat the fruit – that is, after the act conventionally known as the Fall. This reading suggests that Adam and Eve are involved in a seemingly postlapsarian relationship, even in their prelapsarian state.<sup>40</sup> Slavoj Žižek claims that "life in Paradise is always pervaded by an infinite melancholy," which is perhaps particularly true of Paradise as Milton describes it in *Paradise Lost*: Satan visits, and angels struggle to protect Adam and Eve (even telling Adam that they need protection).<sup>41</sup> As we shall see, this is not to say that the "completing of the mortal sin / original" (IX.1003–1004) does not matter, but that it is instead treated as something that signifies a change, rather than a "Fall" per se.

In "Patriarchal Poetry," Gilbert describes Milton's *Paradise Lost* as telling "the story of woman's secondness, her otherness, and how that otherness leads inexorably to her demonic anger, her sin, her fall, and her exclusion from that garden of the Gods which is also, for her, the garden of poetry."<sup>42</sup> She was not the first reader to reach the conclusion that *Paradise Lost* narrates the story of women's first and therefore supposedly "natural" exclusion. As early as the eighteenth century, Johnson referred to Milton's "contempt of females."<sup>43</sup> After Gilbert, Eve's otherness becomes a central topic of the poem; subsequently, for example, Karen Edwards can sketch "an adversarial debate between 'prosecutorial' and 'apologetic' critics,"<sup>44</sup> between those who think that Milton places Eve in a secondary position of otherness, and those who see Milton as ahead of his time "in granting women a dignity and responsibility rarely conceded in the seventeenth century."<sup>45</sup> I argue for a third way, one that relies precisely on what Gilbert calls Eve's "otherness" to reconcile the "prosecutorial" and



the "apologetic" approaches. For Gilbert, Eve's otherness makes the poem antifeminist. Those who disagree usually explain this otherness away, as for example by contextualizing it in seventeenth-century terms. In the third way I am proposing, however, what both sides treat as the scandal of the poem – Eve's Otherness – becomes instead its topic.

Both sides underestimate how the poem might be concerned precisely with a consideration of Eve's response to having been placed in the position Gilbert describes as "her otherness," her domination by Adam. Arguing that *Paradise Lost* narrates the development of its human characters – a story of the modern response to modernity – my reading focuses on Adam and Eve, because they adjust to losing paradise and learn to live with the otherwise traumatic upheavals that follow. Eve, in particular, emerges as positively instigating modernity, in part through her proposal to separate and her eating of the fruit. Adam might drive Eve to want to work alone, and thus to the eating of the fruit, but in *Paradise Lost* Eve embodies the emergence of the modern individual, the type Bruno Latour calls "a-modern." As Nancy Armstrong contends, "the modern individual was first and foremost a woman,"<sup>46</sup> and in *Paradise Lost* it is Eve who brings Adam along. Together, and with the help of a visiting angel who shows Adam subsequent human history, Adam and Eve learn how to be modern in response to the upheaval of modernity. Experiencing modernity does not suffice to make us modern; rather, being modern requires a particular relationship of equanimity to the changes modernity bring. By the end, Adam and Eve have learned how to achieve that relationship together. *Paradise Lost* proposes a positive reading of modernity's traumatic upheaval, represented in the poem by the severing of Adam and Eve's prior relationship, with God and with each other.

With *A Theory of Freedom* (2001), Philip Pettit argues that the will of an actor is free when "the action [is] truly theirs, not an action produced under pressure from others,"<sup>47</sup> and Pettit calls this the ideal of "non-domination."<sup>48</sup> Pettit distinguishes his preferred idea of "non-domination" from other, more familiar models of "noninterference." A libertarian ideal, freedom as noninterference can occur even in tyrannical regimes, where a privileged few might benefit from noninterference. But in such a polity the lucky few would still live under the threat of domination, a threat not yet directed against them, only because they have been left alone, so far. With his preferred idea of freedom as nondomination, Pettit defends a vision of "freedom in the agent, rather than of free will."<sup>49</sup> That is, Pettit's claim for the freedom of the will is limited, but his claim for the differences of the agents is broad, and actively protected in the nondomination model. Unlike noninterference, nondomination may necessitate intervention, to

protect those who might otherwise be subjected to domination – Eve in *Paradise Lost*, for example. According to Pettit, freedom as nondomination offers the advantage of what he calls “discursive control,”<sup>50</sup> an education in and expansion of self-representation that is central to the development of human capacities.<sup>51</sup> In this way, freedom as nondomination and discursive control facilitates growth, not merely choice, which I argue can be seen in the last quarter of *Paradise Lost*.

*Paradise Lost* could be, and usually is, read as a poem about the libertarian ideal of the freedom to choose (and the related risk of choosing badly). However, it could be, but is not usually, read as a poem about the nondomination ideal of needing a space in which to be different (and the related risks of committing oneself to living with difference, or to loving, in a word). In Book IX, though, Eve presses for that space of nondomination. And in that, Eve represents the reader. What Pettit calls “freedom in the agent” applies to reading *Paradise Lost*: The possibilities lie far beyond merely choosing readings, or selecting interpretive options. The different ways in which a line might be read are not entirely a matter of rational, controlled exercise of the will, not even the free will. With *Paradise Lost*, what we call reading is a productive combination of what is in the text with what is in the reader. The process of reading the poem is constitutive, both of the poem’s meaning for the reader, and of the reader’s extended possibilities as a reader. *Paradise Lost* thus hosts the space made possible after the end of an agreed-upon system, or with the beginning of a valuing of difference. This pluralism, and this tolerance for – and even invitation to – pluralism characterizes the modern response to modernity. And in *Paradise Lost* that pluralism is produced, in part, by Milton’s approach to verse in this poem, an approach he describes in the preface.

We often use a vocabulary of “choice” to describe what is in actuality a way of accommodating differences. The freedom is not so much in the will, but around the will, in the conditions which would allow our full, different capacities to be developed. *Paradise Lost* proposes freedom, but not necessarily the Enlightenment; it offers choice, but not necessarily rationality. As Rumrich puts it, “Milton’s belief in human freedom is complicated and limited, more so than is usually recognized.”<sup>52</sup> With the reading I am pursuing in this chapter, *Paradise Lost* offers what Warren Chernaik calls “a space for human freedom.”<sup>53</sup> Such a space differs from the familiar arguments about free will in that it allows up front for the consequences of a range of forces in shaping the will, a process of shaping that is neither free in itself nor necessarily freeing. Through its characters’ development, *Paradise Lost* narrates a process not just of realization but also of change.

In Book VIII, when Adam asks God, prior to the creation of Eve, "Among unequals what society / Can sort, what harmony or true delight?" (VIII.383–384), Adam sets out the (a-)modern, democratic nondominating measure against which his relationship with Eve can be judged: (in) equality, society, harmony, and true delight. However, it is not until three-quarters of the way through a poem that begins "Of man's first disobedience" that readers learn that Adam is wondering whether inequality diminishes society, harmony, and true delight. This later development offers readers an opportunity to reread or reevaluate the initial question of man's disobedience. There are some who argue, as David Norbrook does, that "though Adam asks for an equal, God brings him a being who proves unequal."<sup>54</sup> By contrast, I argue that *Paradise Lost* asks readers whether they think Adam succeeds with Eve in regard to the equality, harmony, society, and delight he claims he finds lacking with the animals.

By arguing that inequality is unsatisfying, Adam also provides terms for evaluating Eve's experience. For much of the poem, Adam does not treat Eve with the equality Adam tells God he wants. Adam creates his own trap, and steps right into it. His failure is so spectacular that it constitutes one of the principal narrative and thematic developments of the poem. As Peter Herman puts it, "In *Paradise Lost*, the Fall occurs in large part as a consequence of the patriarchy created, represented and perpetuated by God, Adam, and Raphael."<sup>55</sup> The fact that Adam's conversation with God about the limits of conversation with animals, which precedes the creation of Eve, comes in Book VIII, or three-quarters of the way through the poem, is also significant for my reading: This crucial insight arrives late in one of Milton's late poems.

When readers first encounter Adam and Eve, the setting could not be more pastoral, the politics more divine right, nor the economy more feudal: Adam and Eve live in a garden, Adam has a speaking relationship with God (who creates Eve after talking to Adam), and Adam and Eve's "task" is agricultural – to "prune these growing plants, and tend these flowers" (IV.437–438). Although readers later learn a more nuanced story about why Adam asked God to create Eve, at least in the early scenes of Adam and Eve together, Adam presumes that his precedence has a political analogue, and that it makes him the authority within Eden. When Adam and Eve make their first appearance, in Book IV, they inhabit a very narrow world, in which they do not yet know the difference between good and evil, but in which there is a presumption that their unexamined roles are nonetheless fixed. In other words, Milton is offering a carefully drawn portrait of a premodern world, a socially static setting in which

informed choice is impossible. After Adam and Eve eat the fruit, *Paradise Lost* illustrates the familiar, theoretical attributes of modernity understood negatively: a cataclysmic experience of change (e.g., when Eve ate the fruit, "Earth felt the wound" [ix.782]); the disenchantment of the world; and the disappearance of God, who banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden, leaving them to take their "solitary" way. However, *Paradise Lost* also describes the development of two characters for whom the location of the theological – of presence – has changed, becoming both internal to themselves, and intrinsic to their relationship (and thus in a way external to each of them respectively as well).

In this, I disagree, then, with those who believe that Adam "is at fault in permitting her to sever from him," as Danielson puts it.<sup>56</sup> I worry, in a deep counterfactual, what Eve's undying life would have been like if she had not pushed for a space for human freedom, a space of nondomination. Nor do I think, as Wittreich and others do, that in *Paradise Lost* "Milton upheld the authority of the husband, even sanctioned despotic rule by him."<sup>57</sup> Quite the opposite: The poem narrates Adam's eventual recognition that he has inequitably treated his partner in Paradise. What a grueling process it is for readers to witness, too. Determining why Adam treats Eve as he does depends on when one believes man's first disobedience occurred, and, relatedly, therefore, when Paradise was lost. In seeing God, Eve, and multiple angels as helping to bring Adam to a new level of positive self-awareness, I also disagree with those who would argue that "Eve's tragedy is that she was really strong and capable ... but failed ... to live up to her promise."<sup>58</sup> Again, quite the opposite: The tragedy (if there is one in *Paradise Lost*) resides in the way in which Eve is called upon in Paradise to develop and reveal her strength and capability – showing the person who wanted a more equitable and harmonious society than he found with the animals what he had meant when he said that to their creator.

Eve's first day is narrated twice, once by Eve, in Book iv, and once by Adam, in Book viii. Through the "forward and 'back scanning'" that *Paradise Lost* encourages thereby, readers can see Adam describe the same events that Eve describes four books earlier.<sup>59</sup> As Adam then begins to recount for Raphael Eve's running away from him, we can see that, while Adam reports on the same scene, he interprets it quite differently. When Eve tells the story, on the first occasion readers see it, she reports that in her first moments when she "bent down to look" (iv.460) into a clear lake and saw her reflection "with answering looks / Of sympathy and love" (iv.464–465), she is interrupted by a voice that directs her to "follow me" (iv.469). Christine Froula calls it an "archetypal scene of canonical

instruction," and although it is not then clear whose voice that is, whether God's or Adam's, it is more important that Eve is interrupted at all.<sup>60</sup> By distracting her – "there I had fixed / Mine eyes till now" (iv.465–466) – and narrating her vision for her, this voice affects what she thinks of her own image, substituting the voice's description for her own experience. Eve is told "What there thou seest fair creature is thyself" (iv.468–469). It would be more accurate to say "that is an image of you," or "that is your image," but that is not what the voice says. As a consequence, not only does this voice purport to explain what Eve sees, it also confuses her self with an image. By describing her as her image, that voice makes her Other to herself. When the voice goes on to claim that it will bring Eve to "he / whose image thou art" (iv.471–472), Eve's identity changes again. First she was the image in the lake; now, she is the image of a "he." In the process, Eve is doubly othered: Not only has she been told that she is Other to herself, now there is an other to whom she is other.

When she does meet Adam, Eve reports she believes that he is "less fair, / Less winning soft, less amiably mild, / Than that smooth watery image" (iv.478–479). In one sense of "fair," Eve sees Adam as less attractive than herself. In another sense, there is also the implication that Eve immediately judges Adam to be less just. In either case, Eve would prefer to be by herself: "Back I turned" (iv.480), she says. In other words, Eve runs away. When she then relates the image of Adam "following" her (iv.481), yelling "Return fair Eve, / Whom fly'st thou?" (iv.481–482) it is clear that Eve did more than simply turn back and Adam did more than follow. Desperate for her return, Adam is chasing her, running after her as she flees, telling her that "part of my soul I seek thee" (iv.487). For Adam, that is, Eve matters because by arriving second she resolved the inadequacies he had experienced during his time as the first. How could Eve understand why this being is running after her, saying that she came from him? How could anyone?

Strikingly, as far as Adam is concerned, Eve is actually another version of himself. Eve reports Adam describing her as "my other half" (iv.497–498). Eve's impression – well founded, considering she notes he claims her as he runs after her – is that Adam thinks she is there to complete him, to make him whole. Eve reports that Adam implicitly sees himself as her creator: "to give thee being I lent / Out of my side to thee" (483–484). Not only does Adam inaccurately say that he gave Eve being, but he also claims that his rib was *loaned* to her. Thus, when his other half does arrive, he is there to reclaim what he thinks is rightly his, from the second human whom he casts as very much the same, "his flesh, his bone" (iv.483). "With

that," Eve reports, "thy gentle hand / Seized mine" (iv.488–489). She says, "I yielded," and sees, she adds, "how beauty is excelled by manly grace" (iv.490). There is a subversive subtlety in her concluding lines. Is it that Eve yielded, acquiescing to the violence of his seizing her hand? Or is she yielding in her acknowledgment of how manly grace exceeds her beauty?

If she is yielding, that does not necessarily mean Eve is agreeing or conceding. Indeed, one way of reading her summary would be that Adam's seizing her (hand) has shown quite precisely, and maybe bitterly, just how it is that manly grace exceeds beauty – with violence. At least in the order the narrative unfolds, this act might represent man's first disobedience, although it has instead been described as "Eve's seduction," in Neil Forsyth's terms, by which he presumably means Adam's supposed seduction of Eve.<sup>61</sup> One can only wonder at seduction that involves running after, grabbing, and pulling the "seduced."<sup>62</sup> I agree with Forsyth that Adam's approach is also "an undercurrent in the marital quarrel of Adam and Eve," with the important qualification that is not only an undercurrent.<sup>63</sup> It might be the main current.

This scene in Book iv, in which Eve recounts her first moments, is often read in very positive terms. Critics have long praised the scene's, and the poem's, "frank depictions of eroticism."<sup>64</sup> William Shullenberger summarizes this tradition nicely when he writes that "one of Milton's most startling inventions in *Paradise Lost* is the fullness and frankness of their erotic delight."<sup>65</sup> There are other passages to which readers could turn, but this early scene between Adam and Eve is sufficiently replete with full frank imagery to illustrate the point: "eyes / of conjugal attraction unreproved" (iv.492–493), "her swelling breast / naked" (iv.495–496), and "kisses pure" (iv.502). The critical tradition is repeatedly struck with delight at what are taken to be images of pleasure. Thomas Luxon, for example, exclaims that Eve's "desire is not companionship, but simply the desire to be needed and desired."<sup>66</sup> The evidence for such a claim is not clear; indeed, there is plenty of evidence to the contrary, including, for example, her running away on first seeing Adam.

An established tradition reads Eve in the poem's early domestic and blissful bower scenes as helpfully fulfilling a desire for desiring. For such readers, this desire is shared by Adam, Eve, Milton (and, perhaps, themselves). Such scenes, these critics argue, distinguish Milton from his contemporaries, and offer a reservoir of historic possibilities available for contemporary discussions of sexuality. Thus James Grantham Turner believes that *Paradise Lost* is "flanked by polemics against those 'hypocrites' who deny Edenic sexuality or censor it behind 'shows of seeming pure'."<sup>67</sup> Milton

and these readers, then, are united in celebration of Edenic sexuality, represented for many by the phrase in the scene describing Adam and Eve as "Emparadised in one another's arms" (iv.506). The devastating question this scene raises, though, is whether Edenic sexuality is paradisaical – a question whose evaluative dimension is inaccessible to Adam and Eve. Unfallen, they do not yet have knowledge of good and evil. One answer to the question might be found by noting that it is Satan who describes Adam and Eve as "emparadised" (iv.506), but without being either hypocritical or censorious we might also be helped in addressing that question by listening to what Eve herself says about her initial reaction to Adam.

In his recounting for Raphael, four books later, Adam's version of Eve's first moments, Adam claims that Eve "would be wooed, and not unsought be won" (viii.503). Adam's presumption that Eve is running away from him because she wants him to follow her is another fine candidate for "man's first disobedience." In the order of the story's telling, it is at least the second candidate, but in the order of the events, it precedes Adam's seizing Eve's hand. Although readers encounter it in Book VIII, Adam's idea of Eve precedes her creation, and follows her as Adam runs after her, yelling, in a scene now described differently by its two participants (and described twice in the same poem, suggesting a founding trauma in their relationship). In Eve's version, she "yielded," while in Adam's version he led her "to the nuptial bower" (viii.510). The need for equality – on the basis of which Adam proposes a new type of being – is greatly diminished if the new creature is to be pursued, caught, and captured. Put that way, the new creature sounds a lot like a domesticated animal. Moreover, it is important to remember that Adam is telling this story in this way after he, like the readers, has already heard Eve's perception of the same events.

Where Adam gets such an idea of wooing – of pursuing – a woman, is a mystery, one usually solved by praising Adam or his Edenic language. At least since Patrick Hume's 1695 claim that "wonderful was the knowledge God bestowed on Adam, nor that part of it least, which concerned the naming Things aright," there has been an argument that Adam's Edenic language was charged with extraordinary prelapsarian powers.<sup>68</sup> This critical appreciation of Adam's investment in discourse extends to a belief in an almost telekinetic power of Edenic language. For some readers, Adam is an extraordinarily capable character, precisely because of his ability to use words, as evidence of his being "such a brilliant and discursively rational man," in Luxon's phrase.<sup>69</sup> According to Luxon, "Milton's Adam ... comes into being with language and his subjectivity hard-wired,"<sup>70</sup> but what if that is the problem? Could the premodern conventions of chivalric

romance be built into Adam's language, even an Edenic language from before both the Fall and the destruction of the Tower of Babel? Or, is it, again, just Adam's assumption, as with so many of his uses of language? What if, in fact, the supposedly remarkable, powerful pre-fall Edenic language of Adam is suffused with assumptions which are neither accurate in general nor applicable to Eve, the second human God creates, in particular? In *The Sexual Contract*, Carol Pateman asks why "all the classic theorists (including Hobbes) insist that, in civil society, women not only can but must enter into the marriage contract?" Adam apparently shares that assumption, and insistence, but I would argue that the poem also raises Pateman's question, narratologically, through the character of Eve.<sup>71</sup>

Rather than Adam's pursuit being, as he claims, something Eve wants (which seems unlikely given her description four books earlier of first seeing Adam), Adam's chasing after Eve constitutes, by contrast, a premodern, patriarchal precondition for Eve's modernizing experiment in eating the fruit. Readers are asked to consider what eternity might be like with someone who makes such assumptions; not only is Adam claiming her as part of himself, he is also claiming that she wants to be chased. Pursuing her, seizing her, and taking her to the nuptial bed is an act of violence, a sexual one around which the stories by both participants swirl, one-quarter and three-quarters through the poem as a whole. Terry Eagleton's point regarding Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* may also apply to *Paradise Lost*: "the point around which the ... text pivots – is the rape; yet the rape goes wholly unrepresented."<sup>72</sup> In *Paradise Lost*, the initial scene of Adam chasing and grabbing Eve is repeatedly described, like a trauma. Adam and Eve not only do not know any better; without knowledge of good or evil, there is not a concept of "better" itself. Despite their having no knowledge of good or evil, one of them can well up with tears even in Paradise (after, among other things, recounting this event, which they both retell, differently).

When Adam claims that Eve seems "as one intended first, not after made" (VIII.555), which he does in his conversation with God, Adam invokes numerical terms – "one" and "first" – while again revealing thereby the unequal assumptions that shape his reactions to Eve. Adam is surprised that, although Eve is created second, she seems so self-possessed as to be the kind of being he would associate with being first (or being made first). Adam assumes that arriving first – basically being older – suffices to make somebody the leader, a premodern assumption about tradition that this poem tests. In yet another good candidate for the first disobedience, Adam thus establishes the inequality that he told God he wants to leave behind in having a human companion. Of course, that inequality is already implicit



in Adam's earlier claim that Eve would "not unsought be won" (VIII.503), as is the mathematical logic of his thinking about one and first. Adam's phrase is a chivalric ritual, and also a pun depending on how readers hear what they see. Not only would Adam gain (or "win") Eve; he also presumes that she would be one (the homophone of "won"). To Adam, Eve would be won in order to be one: "one flesh, one heart, one soul" (VIII.499). In his version, then, Adam argues that Eve, being second, can find oneness only when she is subsumed in a two (in this case with the other one from whom she initially runs away).

It is in the book following Adam's conversation with Raphael that Eve proposes separation. The dialogue in Book IX between Eve and Adam evinces the poem's roots in drama. But the fuller theatricality of the scene stems from its timing, after Adam's recounting his experience to Raphael: By staying close, Eve hears everything, including Adam's recounting the time before Eve's creation; his presumption that in her running away from him she wanted to be wooed; and his conviction that she is wisest, discreetest, and best. Eve's "sweet composed austerity" (IX.272) after Adam's initial rebuff of her proposal that they work separately might reflect something like frustration which has built up over the previous book, as she gains new insight into Adam. Eve might be *angry* at Adam after what he has just said about her (and, by extension, after what he has just said about himself, too). In Book IX, the narrator describes Eve "As one who loves, and some unkindness meets" (IX.271). The idea that such emotions are being experienced in Eden is shocking, if Eden is indeed Paradise. When understood as the dramatic development it is, Eve's proposal to separate carries with it the implication that she is reacting against Adam's (premodern, feudal, chivalric) narration to Raphael. Eve herself raises thereby the question of whether Eden is Paradise – and implies that it is not, if "Frail is our happiness" (IX.340). By the time Eve alludes to the possible frailty of happiness, she has also apparently experienced some unkindness, and she reveals that she has overheard everything that Adam said in Book VIII, including his presumption that she would be "wooed" (VIII.503).

Eve's argument leaves Adam with no choice, so to speak, and Adam ultimately tells Eve "Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more" (IX.372). Adam's simple statement "go" flies in the face of his previously stated wish for "fellowship" (VIII.389) and his clear preference that the two of them face threats together. It cannot be easy, then, for Adam to say "go" to Eve; he has good reason to worry about the threats they face. Joan Bennett rightly argues "that the crux of the scene is in that one word 'Go'."<sup>73</sup> For Luxon, "when Adam allows Eve to go ... he finally fails in his proper role of

humanist husband.”<sup>74</sup> That is, for some readers, Eve's departure represents a profound failure on Adam's part; apparently, he should have restrained her, maybe seized her hand again, for her own humanist good (and his?). If Adam had, then he could have continued to do what he was doing with Eve, regularly revisiting the blissful bower, with its full, frank depictions of erotic longings. For other readers, Eve's departure – this moment in this scene – is central to the poem's argument, a defense of human liberty. As Bennett argues “what is at stake in this scene, as in the whole epic, is the meaning of human liberty.”<sup>75</sup> For some readers, this scene is about Adam, masculinity, and his failure to fulfill this gendered responsibility; for some, it is about Eve and what it means to be truly and freely human. By Book IX, the stakes appear to be larger for Eve, but they are actually substantial for them both; if Eve does not leave, and if Adam does not let her leave, he is right: She would be more absent in her enforced presence.

While siding with Eve's freedom, though, Adam uses the imperative when he says “go.” Adam does not merely “allow” Eve to depart; he commands that she do so. Grammatically, he commands her liberty, which is a contradiction. Thus, the poem lets Adam, Eve, and the readers grapple with the difference between the import and the form of Adam's statement. What Luxon calls “equalist feminism” is indeed as Luxon claims put to the test, one that it passes by the end of the poem, but not here, due to Adam's command.<sup>76</sup> Rather, the important equalist feminist moment in this scene occurs in the words that follow Adam's “go.” There, Adam shows the most understanding of Eve we have seen from him so far; he is right to think that her staying, not free, would absent her more. Adam is imagining what this conversation might feel like to Eve, an important development, a development connected, regrettably, to his mind, to her departure. It is also important that Adam's sentence here confuses going and staying, that it explores the paradox whereby Eve staying would be similar to her going. (This is a figure of speech that recurs at the end of the poem, as we shall see when we get to Book XII.)

Gilbert's claim that *Paradise Lost* narrates Eve's, and woman's, exclusion from the garden of poetry is right, up to a point – the point at which she separates from Adam. Once she is alone in the garden, Eve emerges as a poet. The circumstances surrounding Eve's discussion with a serpent in the garden of Eden, intensify the poetic pressures in the poem, raising questions about attention, both Eve's, and readers. For example, as it turns out, lines 510 to 514, not long before Eve talks to the serpent, include an acrostic – the first letters of those lines spell “SATAN” (IX. 510–514). The middle line of those five, the line which begins with “T,” read by itself, announces,

"To interrupt, sidelong he works his way" (ix.512). That is, the narrator interrupts the sentence, and the poem, to point out, only to the readers, that sidelong Satan works his way, as indeed the word "SATAN" does, along the left side of the poem. If readers, who know the story about a serpent in the Garden of Eden, do not notice "SATAN," as the word appears on the page, after being told by the narrator where to look, how could they blame Eve? Moreover, Eve's first sentences to the serpent are delivered in a fourteen-line monologue, having thereby the general form of a sonnet (ix.553–566), albeit an unusual one. Eve's first sentence ends on line seven, rather than the traditional eighth. Still, that eighth line – "Thee, serpent, subtlest beast of all the field" – is important in itself. After Eve leaves Adam, the poetry requires additional layers of attention, through which Eve reveals herself to be one of the poem's poets.

The serpent addresses Eve as "sovereign mistress," the first of many honorifics with which he will refer to her (ix.532), references in which the terms of seventeenth-century debates over modernity are clear throughout. In this case, his opening address appeals to Eve's thus far unacknowledged political power (practically citing Thomas Hobbes). In another sentence, the serpent engages the visual observation bent of seventeenth-century empiricism (e.g., telescope and microscope).<sup>77</sup> Satan says "Wonder not . . . that I approach thee thus, and gaze / Insatiate" (xi.532, 535–536). The serpent's claim reads in two opposed ways. In one, the serpent might be telling Eve not to be surprised that he approaches her and gazes on her insatiate. That is, on one level the serpent is saying, "wonder not that I approach thee and [that I] gaze [at thee]." In this sense, the implication has to do, yet again, with looking at Eve, and the serpent is saying he cannot be blamed for looking; Who would wonder if he did, he implies. But the same sentence could also be accurately read as an invitation for Eve to gaze, to not wonder and to gaze, to be viewer rather than the viewed. In this second reading, both verbs are also commands – wonder not, and gaze. To put the same point another way, the serpent begins his appeals to Eve with reference to the imperial and the empirical. Calling the tree of knowledge of good and evil as the "Mother of science" (ix.680), the serpent emphasizes both the experiment of the situation, and the empiricism that undergirds his claim: "look on me" (ix.687), a talking snake; if I can eat the fruit and speak as a result, imagine what you could do, by "proportion meet" (ix.711). Apparently, she accepts his empiricist reasoning, and his offer, and modernity (in Eden).

After eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve makes the claim – the claim of modernity – for the importance of

experiential, reflective learning. Having eaten the fruit, Eve reflects on her relationship with Adam, wondering how she can “render me more equal” (IX.823), “for inferior who is free?” (IX.825). That is, Eve is concerned about the question of equality in her relationship with Adam and sees the fruit as a means to changing the relationship. To one way of reading, such lines suggest that Eve’s discussion of equality represents a consequence of her eating the forbidden fruit; it looks like an unjustified, maybe only fallen, wish for equality contributes to the Fall. But this is also the first time that readers have seen Eve speaking for herself and by herself, without Adam or Raphael nearby. It could also be, then, that this concern about equality, emerging so soon after her eating the fruit, has already been present and may contribute to her separation earlier in Book IX. Eve wishes to be more equal, but sees herself being treated as an inferior. *Paradise Lost*, more clearly than Genesis, gives readers reason to think that Eve is right in her perception of her treatment (including her hearing Adam redescribe the same first moment she has already discussed, differently).

When Eve offers the fruit to Adam, she does so in “bland words” which revolve repeatedly around the question of equality: “thou therefore also taste, that equal lot / May join us, equal joy, as equal love” (IX.881–882). Eve’s request prompts an uncharacteristically “speechless” Adam to begin to articulate what it is specifically that he loves about Eve, as an individual – her singularity, whatever makes her unique or different, without being perfect or Other. He says that even if God were to create “another Eve” (IX.911), “loss of thee / Would never from my heart” (IX.912–913). At this all-important moment, Adam focuses on what he would miss about Eve, as Eve. It is not simply that Adam wants someone else there to make him feel better; there is instead something about this particular person that he likes, even if it is “only” their history together. This moment has provoked a range of responses. Dennis Burden, for example, argues that at this point Adam “should leave her. He would have good grounds for divorce.”<sup>78</sup> Danielson goes further and argues that Adam should have been more “heroic”: Adam could have done “what the second Adam ultimately did do: take the punishment of fallen humanity upon himself.”<sup>79</sup>

While it is true that Adam does not elect to divorce Eve on the spot or sacrifice himself in anticipation of all human history as some commentators on the poem would prefer, it is just as important that he chooses to be with Eve out of his sense that there is something about her that could not be replaced. It means Adam is starting to recognize her uniqueness, or the uniqueness of his relationship with her. It means that they might be on their way to a relationship that might be improved, for both of them.

When Adam realizes that a second Eve would be different than this Eve, she is no longer simply the only other person, the one God creates for him. Although it does not fit the pattern some apparently associate with strong male heroes (i.e., going it alone, discarding his previous relationship with his wife, and starting over again), valuing a unique memory is requisite for Adam's beginning to see Eve on something like her own terms (and not, I would argue, "submit[ting] his heavenly citizenship to the indignities of fallen conversation," as Luxon describes it).<sup>80</sup>

The critical presumption regarding *Paradise Lost*, and the theological tradition regarding Genesis, contends that after Adam and Eve eat the fruit, they undergo a nearly physiological transformation, as if the apple were, say, a morally clarifying hallucinogenic mushroom: The fruit changes them, altering their perception, and making them ashamed. Given that they are "intoxicated" (IX.1008) after eating the fruit, while "in lust they burn" (IX.1015), there is some evidence for this reading, particularly for those who believe that *Paradise Lost* offers a full frank celebration of erotic desire. However, perhaps especially given the familiar full frankness of its erotic depictions, *Paradise Lost* opens up other, frank but less celebratory possibilities. In one, if the magical fruit alters their mental state, maybe Adam and Eve do awful things to each other after the fruit; maybe the mind-altering substance leads to terrible bodily acts. Turner, for example, claims that "Paradisaal sexuality moved to a calm, full rhythm, orderly, 'seasonal,' and passionate at the same time," but "the dynamics of fallen sexuality, by contrast, are at once too slack and too tense."<sup>81</sup> Tension certainly follows sexuality after Adam and Eve eat the fruit, but it is not clear that the activity itself has changed. In the same way that readers are not told that Adam and Eve's paradisaal sexuality is calm, full-rhythmed, orderly, and seasonal, so too readers are not told that their post-fruit sexuality is slack, or tense. Instead, readers are given the tense dialogue that unfolds between Adam and Eve after their somewhat obscured post-fruit erotic experience.

I would propose that a malevolence or inappropriateness or inequity in their old routine is clear – maybe only now clear; it is at least clearer than it was in Book IV when Eve recounts how Adam chased her and she first "yielded." After all, in Book IX after the fruit, as reported in Book IV before it, Adam "seized" "Her hand" (IX.1037) and "He led her nothing loath" (IX.1039). Again as before, "flowers were the couch" (IX.1039). After they awake, something seems to have happened overnight; what they used to do together on the flowers means something different now. Maybe it is because the fruit had magical powers to awaken a latent

moral compass. However, as William Poole points out, “the notion that the *arbor scientiae* was a genuinely potent tree is mooted by both Adam and Eve ... and is supposed to be felt as false.”<sup>82</sup> More likely, the fruit, “the only sign of our obedience,” is only a sign, then, as Adam told Eve it was, back in Book IV (IV.428). After the fruit, and maybe especially after these first fruits of the fruit, Adam and Eve know they have disobeyed. They have disobeyed the creator, of course, but maybe “love’s disport” (IX.1042) shows them that they were disobeying who they each were. And if the events of the preceding night left “their minds darkened,” then they are now in a position of reconsidering all their previous visits to the “blissful bower” (IV.690).

As Book IX ends, Adam blames Eve for what he calls her “desire of wandering” (IX.1136) and she defends herself against what she calls his accusation of a “will / Of wandering” (IX.1146). Adam calls “desire” what she thinks he has called “will.” Or Eve calls “will” what Adam calls “desire.” Soon after eating the fruit, that is, Adam and Eve are not hearing what each other is saying, and they are confusing desire and will. Adam and Eve are bogged down in mutual recriminations, gendered misunderstandings. And, perhaps, this is a fortunate development. As Sharon Achinstein notes, Milton was “a promoter of a vision of domestic happiness and the avatar of a new kind of companionate marriage.”<sup>83</sup> Maybe it is a *felix culpa*; maybe Adam, newly committed to Eve, will also need to similarly commit to a new kind of relationship with her. Without the so-called Fall, and the recriminations which follow, there is no hope for a companionate relationship. The so-called Fall may be the means to renegotiate their social contract. Without a renegotiation, Adam and Eve would have persisted, presumably forever, in a relationship in which Adam sees Eve as completing him, as being there to complete him.

Although in the last line of Book IX, “of their vain contest appeared no end” (IX.1189), by the end of the next book, Adam offers Eve a reparative reading, almost in so many words: He proposes that they head “to the place / Repairing where he judged us” (X.1087). This layered expression, “to the place repairing,” which occurs twice in the last twenty-five lines of Book X, initiates a shared process in which Adam and Eve “confess / Humbly our faults, and pardon beg, with tears” (X.1088–1089). On one level, Adam and Eve are returning, or, repairing, to a particular place, the one at which they were judged earlier. On another level, Adam and Eve are rebuilding, or, in that sense, repairing, their frayed relationship; in the process, they are also re-pairing, that is, becoming a pair again. Adam thus

points a way forward for himself and Eve, offering a means whereby they might begin "repairing," in the sense of "fixing."

If they repair, or retire, together, maybe Adam and Eve can start to repair, or put back together, their relationship. "Forthwith," repeating the same phrase from just ten lines earlier, the narrator describes Adam and Eve "to the place / Repairing" (x.1098–1099), where "both confessed" (x.1100). In this "sorrow unfeigned," Adam and Eve begin the process whereby they become a pair, again; this, then, is in a sense the place of their re-pairing. If they cannot become a pair again, the poem cannot have the ending that it does. The poem's a-modern possibilities depend on this repairing, on a kind of reparation. Unless Adam and Eve repair, in several senses, they would not be "hand in hand" (xii.648) at the end, as they "Through Eden took their solitary way" (xii.649). They would not be a one made of two, an ambiguously "solitary" (xii.649) pair, surrounded by an infinite number of evil, threatening, and expanding possibilities, if they do not repair.

### Notes

- 1 Joseph Wittreich, *Why Milton Matters: A New Preface to His Writings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xvii.
- 2 Stephen Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 31.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 4 See also Lee Morrissey, "Radical Literacy and Radical Democracy in the 1640s," in Lee Morrissey, *The Constitution of Literature: Literacy, Democracy, and Early English Literary Criticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 25–60.
- 5 Mary G. Fenton and Louis Schwartz, eds., *With Wandering Steps: Generative Ambiguity in Milton's Poetics* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2016).
- 6 Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 436.
- 7 "The Verse." This and all other *Paradise Lost* citations come from *John Milton*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 355, and will be cited parenthetically in the text.
- 8 Samuel Johnson, "Milton," in *Lives of the English Poets*, 2 vols (New York: Dutton, 1950), 55–114: 113.
- 9 Richard Bradford, "Milton's Graphic Poetics," in *Remembering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions*, ed. Mary Nyquist and Margaret Ferguson (New York: Methuen, 1988), 179–196: 179.
- 10 In *Milton and the Making of Paradise Lost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 251, William Poole also distinguishes between a vertical and a horizontal in the poem; for Poole, "vertical contamination" refers to epic precedents that are worked into and transformed in the poem; the

“horizontal contamination,” refers to the “twinning” of so many of *Paradise Lost*'s events. By contrast, I am using the horizontal and the vertical to describe how the sense is drawn *variously* from one line of verse into another.

- 11 Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 439.
- 12 T. S. Eliot, “Milton I,” in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 138–145: 143.
- 13 Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship*, 183–184.
- 14 Giorgio Agamben, “The End of the Poem,” in *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 106–115: 106.
- 15 Ann Baynes Coiro, “Sufficient and Free: The Poetry of *Paradise Lost*,” in *Milton Now: Alternative Approaches and Contexts*, ed. Catharine Gray and Erin Murphy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 83–108: 84.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 83.
- 17 Stanley Fish, *Versions of Antihumanism: Milton and Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 26.
- 18 Coiro, “Sufficient and Free,” 85.
- 19 As Nyquist puts it in “Fallen differences, phallogocentric discourses: losing *Paradise Lost* to history,” “*Paradise Lost* is marked by a fall into the history of its reception.” In *Post-structuralism and the Question of History*, ed. Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 212–243: 238.
- 20 Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, 3 vols (1905; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1967), I.183.
- 21 Sandra M. Gilbert, “Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton's *Bogey*,” *PMLA* 93.3 (May 1978), 368–382: 370.
- 22 John P. Rumrich, *Milton Unbound: Controversy and Reinterpretation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.
- 23 Balachandra Rajan, *Milton and the Climates of Reading: Essays by Balachandra Rajan*. Afterword Joseph A. Wittreich (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 63.
- 24 John Leonard, “Self-Contradicting Puns in *Paradise Lost*,” in *A Companion to Milton*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 393–410: 401; Catherine Gimelli Martin, *The Ruins of Allegory: Paradise Lost and the Metamorphosis of Epic Convention* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 100; Victoria Silver, *Imperfect Sense: The Predicament of Milton's Irony* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); and David Quint, *Inside Paradise Lost: Reading the Designs of Milton's Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 3.
- 25 Martin, *The Ruins of Allegory*, 100.
- 26 Leonard, “Self-Contradicting Puns in *Paradise Lost*,” 403.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 404.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 405.
- 29 Poole, *Milton and The Making of Paradise Lost*, 242.
- 30 Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 42.



- 31 Ibid., 21.
- 32 Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship*, 17.
- 33 Coiro, "Sufficient and Free," 85.
- 34 The Fall seems not to have been a central issue in the development of *Paradise Lost*. "The 'Paradise Lost' draft's most interesting trait, though, is an omission.... The Fall itself is not represented," as William Poole notes in *Milton and the Idea of the Fall*, 131.
- 35 Dennis Richard Danielson, *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 219.
- 36 Frances Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," *Representations* 20 (Autumn 1987), 88–112: 109.
- 37 Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract. 30th Anniversary Edition, with a New Preface by the Author* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 3.
- 38 See John Guillory, "From the Superfluous to the Supernumerary: Reading Gender into *Paradise Lost*," in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 68–88: 70.
- 39 Gilbert, "Patriarchal Poetry," 370. I follow the lead of Diane Kelsey McColley, in "an effort to extricate Eve from a reductive critical tradition" (*Milton's Eve* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983], 4).
- 40 I agree with Millicent Bell's argument that Milton "constructed an account of the Fall which subtly obscured any sharp division in the drama, any 'before' and 'after'." "The Fallacy of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*," *PMLA* 48.4 (September 1953), 863–883, 864.
- 41 Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute, or, Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (New York: Verso, 2000), 88.
- 42 Gilbert, "Patriarchal Poetry," 370.
- 43 Johnson, "Milton," in *Lives of the English Poets*, 2 vols (New York: Dutton, 1950), 55–114:93.
- 44 Karen Edwards, "Resisting Representation: All About Milton's Eve," *Exemplaria* 9.1 (Spring 1997), 231–253: 231. I use Edwards' distinctions only provisionally, as heuristic devices to organize my discussion of Eve's status in *Paradise Lost*. For some, Christine Froula's essay, "When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy," *Critical Inquiry* 10.2 (December 1983), 321–347, could represent a "prosecutorial" position, while Joseph Wittreich's *Feminist Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) could stand for the apologetic. Nonetheless, as heuristics, the categories of "prosecutorial" and "apologetic" cannot reflect the complete range and intricacy of the many arguments put forward in the wake of Gilbert's influential article.
- 45 Susanne Woods, "How Free are Milton's Women?" in *Milton and the Idea of Woman*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 15–31: 15.
- 46 Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 8.

- 47 Philip Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 3–4.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 131.
- 51 In this, Pettit overlaps with Martha Nussbaum's "Capabilities Approach," which "commits itself to respect for people's powers of self-definition." *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 18.
- 52 Rumrich, *Milton Unbound*, 11.
- 53 Warren Chernaik, *Milton and the Burden of Freedom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 41.
- 54 David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 487.
- 55 Peter Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 127.
- 56 Danielson, *Milton's Good God*, 146.
- 57 Wittreich, *Why Milton Matters*, 133.
- 58 Leonard, "Self-Contradicting Puns in *Paradise Lost*," 410.
- 59 Martin, *The Ruins of Allegory*, 27.
- 60 Froula, "When Eve Reads Milton," 332.
- 61 Neil Forsyth, *The Satanic Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 261.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 263.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 263.
- 64 James Grantham Turner, "Libertinism and Toleration: Milton, Bruno, and Aretino," in *Milton and Toleration*, ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 107–125: 107.
- 65 William Shullenberger, "Imagining Eden," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paradise Lost*, ed. Louis Schwartz (New York: 2014), 125–137: 133.
- 66 Thomas H. Luxon, *Single Imperfection: Milton, Marriage and Friendship* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005), 120.
- 67 Turner, "Libertinism and Toleration," 107.
- 68 Quoted in John Leonard, *Naming in Paradise: Milton and the Language of Adam and Eve* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1.
- 69 Luxon, *Single Imperfection*, 120.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 102.
- 71 Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 6.
- 72 Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 61.
- 73 Joan S. Bennett, *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 95.
- 74 Luxon, *Single Imperfection*, 156.
- 75 Bennett, *Reviving Liberty*, 95.
- 76 Luxon, *Single Imperfection*, 156.

- 77 As William Poole notes, “science and the Fall are also explicitly linked.” *Milton and the Idea of the Fall*, 187.
- 78 Dennis Burden, *The Logical Epic: A Study of the Argument of Paradise Lost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 170.
- 79 Dennis Danielson, “Through the Telescope of Typology: What Adam Should Have Done,” *Milton Quarterly* 23.3 (October 1989), 121–127: 124.
- 80 Luxon, *Single Imperfection*, 101.
- 81 Turner, *One Flesh*, 304.
- 82 Poole, *Milton and the Idea of the Fall*, 190–191.
- 83 Sharon Achinstein, “Early Modern Marriage in a Secular Age: Beyond the Sexual Contract,” in *Milton in the Long Restoration*, ed. Blair Hoxby and Ann Baynes Coiro (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 363–378: 370–371.