THE METAPHOR OF INVERTED SEXUAL REPRODUCTION

THE PATRIARCHAL METAPHOR OF INVERTED SEXUAL REPRODUCTION IN MILTON'S PARADISE LOST

BY

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Abstract

The thesis concerns the question of male writers and their female muses. It explores how and why male writers were able to invert sexual reproduction textually and 'give birth' to their texts. In many aspects, the texts of the seventeenth century represent a resurgence of this patriarchal metaphor. Milton was not immune from patriarchy, and for this reason I have chosen his epic poem, Paradise Lost, as an example of a text very much immersed in this ideology. The first chapter explores the origins of the inverted sexual metaphor in Plato's Symposium and then examines how and why this metaphor influenced the philosophical, theological, and medical texts of seventeenth century England. This chapter employs the critical analysis used by Mary O'Brien in her feminist text, The Politics of Reproduction. Chapters two and three are close readings of Milton's Paradise Lost, applying the theory discussed in chapter one. Chapter two explores the relationship between the male characters in Milton's poem who 'give birth' (Satan and Adam) and the women to whom they give birth (Sin and Eve). Chapter three explores the relationship between Milton, his muse, and his text. In the context of the conclusion of these two chapters, Milton affirms the patriarchal belief that God made woman, not as a help to man in the public sphere of knowledge, but as a help to man in the private sphere of reproduction.

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Contents

CHAPTER ONE

Conceiving a Metaphor

I

Sometime after John Milton had finished writing Paradise Lost, he was living in a cottage at Chalfont St. Giles. The cottage belonged to Thomas Ellwood, a young pupil of his. Ellwood had been in jail during Milton's stay, but when he was released, he ventured to the country to meet his teacher. Ellwood relates this story:

> After some common discourse had passed between us, he called for a manuscript of his; which being brought he delivered to me, bidding me take it home with me, and read it at my leisure; and when I had done so, return it to him with my judgement thereupon.
>
> When I came home, and set myself to read it, I found it was that excellent poem he entitled, 'Paradise Lost.' After I had, with the best attention read it through, I made him another visit, and returned him his book, with due acknowledgement of the favour he had done me in communicating it to me. He asked me how I liked it and what I thought of it, which I modestly but freely told him, and after some discourse about it, I pleasantly said to him, 'Thou hast said much here of "Paradise Lost," but what hast thou to say of "Paradise Found"?' He made no answer, but sat some time in a muse; then he brake off that discourse and fell upon another subject. (Wilson, 228-29)

"He made no answer, but sat some time in a muse"! We can only guess what Milton mused about. Perhaps it concerned the futility of teacher-student relationships. As a teacher of male students, part of Milton's pedagogical duties was to teach the "ways of

God." The "ways of God" are also central to the story of Paradise Lost. Paradise was lost because of man's disobedience to God. Understanding that the "ways of God" are just implies obeying his laws. For this reason, Milton seeks to "justify the ways of God to men." That Ellwood would suggest another book, 'Paradise Found,' suggests either that he did not understand how paradise was lost or that he did not understand that the "ways of God" are just. Yet both are rather improbable. What is more likely is that Ellwood understood the poem as a great piece of literature and that his suggestion of a second book was meant as an encouragement to Milton to keep writing. But, as we shall see in the following chapters, to Milton, Paradise Lost is more than just a great poem. It is divinely inspired and, much like the Ten Commandments of Moses, it does not require a sequel. In a sense, it is the Word of God. Ellwood's response was certainly disheartening to Milton. Yet the problem of misunderstanding lay not in the poem, but rather in Ellwood's interpretation. Milton has separated himself from his text; meaning and interpretation of the text are left to the reader. For Milton, the anxiety of being alienated from his text must have increased ten-fold that afternoon.

Textual alienation is an experience that all writers undergo. Once a text is out of the hands of the writer, responsibility for the text's meaning is left to the reader. Alienation itself is impossible to avoid; but throughout the history of writing, strategies have been devised to familiarize the reader with the

alienated writer's text, even before the reader reads the text. The most common of these strategic devices is the trope. The word "trope" is derived from the Greek **tropos,** which means a turn, way, manner, style, especially of speech. Metaphor, synecdoche, and prosopopeia are tropes. We say one thing but mean another. Paul De Man calls this process figuration and defines it as "the element in language that allows for the reiteration of meaning by substitution" (De Man, Rhetoric, 114). In a sense, all language is trope or 'figuration.' For example, when we utter the word "tree," the sound "tree" is a substitute for the actual tree we mean. However, though these tropes are familiar to us, and though in fact any form of communication is impossible without them, they do not occur naturally. A trope is created by some writer for some purpose. Educating the reader in the various tropes makes the reading of the written possible. If the reader is familiar with the tropes used by the writer, the writer will find that the reader is a more favorable audience than a reader who is ignorant of these tropes. This does imply that the trope necessarily came before the subject that it signifies. This problem of language intrigued the seventeenth century and led Thomas Hobbes to conclude that "The Light of humane minds is Perspicuous Words, but by exact definitions first snuffed, and purged from ambiguity" (Hobbes, 22).

In the seventeenth century, Hobbes's assertion created an outcry throughout the different philosophical and theological schools, which, though concerned with absolute truth and

absolute knowledge, were all limited to expressing their absolutes in writing. Hobbes is not as modern as he sounds; rather, he believed that an abstract thought such as 'truth' could be defined as long as all men agree on its definition. Arguments for and against Hobbes can be found in university libraries. What is important, however, is that the seventeenth-century writers, including Hobbes, were searching for an absolute knowledge. If all knowledge is writing, as Hobbes asserts, then in writing the writer is claiming knowledge of what he or she has written. The knower has authority over that which is known. Writing in 1975, Edward Said explores the etymological similarities between the word "author" and authority. Hobbes, who often uses latin roots in his definitions, would have found Said's summary obvious. Said writes:

> **Authority** suggests...a constellation of linked meanings: not only, as the OED tells us, "a power to enforce obedience," or "a derived or delegated power," or "a power to influence action," or "a power to inspire belief," or "a person whose opinion is accepted"; not only those, but a connection as well with **author** -- that is, a person who originates or gives existence to something, a begetter, beginner, father, or ancestor, a person also who sets forth written statements. There is still another cluster of meanings: **author** is tied to the past participle **auctus** of the verb **augere**; therefore **auctor**, according to Eric Partridge, is literally an increaser and thus a founder. **Auctoritas** is production, invention, cause in addition to meaning a right of possession. Finally, it means continuance, or a causing to continue. Taken together these meanings are all grounded in the following notions: (1) that of the power of an individual to initiate, institute, establish -- in short, to begin; (2) that this power and its product are an increase over what has been there previously; (3) that the individual wielding this power controls its issue and what is derived therefrom;

> (4) that authority maintains the continuity of its course. (Cited by Gilbert and Gubar, 4)

In devising a trope, for example, a metaphor, the author assumes authority over that metaphor. And if this metaphor is learned and accepted by the reader, then the newly devised metaphor becomes a kind of "fact"; it becomes common knowledge. In Paradise Lost, Milton employs a metaphor that inverts the notion of sexual reproduction: males give birth to both females and texts. It is this metaphor, devised by male writers and employed by Milton in Paradise Lost to "justify the ways of God to men," that my study will explore.

Sexual reproduction requires two people of opposite sex. In textual production, two participants are also required: a writer, and a reader. In order to write, a writer must be able to read. Yet writing must exist in order to be read. For a new language or a new structure of writing to exist, even for a sign to signify, it must be recognizable. Or, to use Jacques Derrida's term, it must be "reiterable" (Gasché, 212-17). In this sense, then, we can say the reader plays the role of the Other, the one who reaffirms the trope.

The nature of the relationship between the writer and the reader can be explored in two stages for there are two kinds of reader. The first is the reader who is other than the writer: another person, the writer's editor, secretary, audience, reviewer, critic, or, as in the passage that began this chapter, Thomas Ellwood. Let us call this reader the public reader. We can not deny that this relationship is of utmost importance to

the textual reproductive process. In Paradise Lost, Milton informs us that he is justifying the ways of God to men. Whether he succeeds depends upon the "men" who read the poem. A male writer, unlike a female writer, finds himself in a relationship with his text that is similar to the relationship he has with his offspring. In the same way that he can never be sure that the child is really his (this was true until very recently), he can never be sure that the reader will understand his text. A female writer, though alienated in the same way from her text, is always certain that her child belongs to her. Over the history of literature, however, to lessen the anxiety of ownership and to affirm their own authority over both text and offspring, male writers have developed a public language of paternity.[1]

The other kind of reader is the reader or Other that is located in the mind of the writer. For in composing his or her text, the writer must reinscribe the images (mental inscriptions) into voice or writing (phonetic and literal inscriptions). In order to reinscribe these mental images, the Other must read them as they appear in the mind of the writer. Let us call this the private reader. Yet how are these mental inscriptions produced and how are they selected? In Paradise Lost, Milton explains how this happens. He writes:

> thou Celestial Light
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight. (III, 51-54) [2]

What is this light and how does it "irradiate"? For Milton and for many other male writers, this private reader is a muse, a female muse. But why, in a language of paternity, is the Other, or private reader, a woman? Both Toril Moi, in Sexual/Textual Politics, and Mary K. DeShazer, in Inspiring Women, credit Simone de Beauvoir with the modern observation that woman, throughout history, has been constructed as the Other in male self-definition: "once a subject seeks to assert himself, the Other, who limits and denies him, is none the less a necessity to him: he attains himself only through that reality which he is not, which is something other than himself" (Moi, 92; DeShazer, 2). Once a male seeks to write, the Other, the private reader who limits 'mental inscriptions' and denies 'literal reinscription of these mental inscriptions,' is nevertheless essential to the process of textual production. However, by feminizing the private reader, the male writer can claim mastery of the private reader through the right of male ascendancy in the patriarchal notion of male/female relationships. The male writer governs his female muse. In using a metaphor of sexual reproduction and inverting his biological nature to that, not necessarily of woman, but of womb, the male writer assures himself that he is not only author of his text, but also, since he shares this muse with other writers, that his text will be acceptable to the patriarchal public reader. Even in the creative act, the inspirational moment, the moment when a male poet invokes his female Muse, his Other, he always possesses,

and is never possessed by, her. DeShazer writes that "Although the poet is typically portrayed as possessed by his muse, in reality it is he who possesses, since the act of naming is hierarchical. As Adam in the biblical tale of creation declared his own superiority over the animals by naming them, so the male poet asserts his power over his creative inspirer even as he invokes her" (DeShazer, 2). The Muse is a trope, and, as a trope, the Muse becomes a tool for the male writer. For this reason, Moi notes, "patriarchal ideology presents woman as immanence, man as transcendence" (Moi, 92). It is not the muse that transcends history, but the invocation of her in male minds. The muse is a trope to extend male temporal consciousness. What is most apparent about this creative male relationship, and what is most unnatural, is the sexual nature. The female muse impregnates the male poet, and he gives birth, brings forth, a new text.

Though this relationship is unnatural, it is very poetic. In fact, it is so poetic -- and by "poetic" I mean that this metaphor has enjoyed reiteration throughout literature -- that by the seventeenth century it has become natural. In the late sixteenth century, Sir Philip Sidney, in his dedication of <u>The Old Arcadia</u> to his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, describes his text as a "child." Sidney writes:

> Here now have you...this idle work of mine, which I fear (like the spider's web) will be thought fitter to be swept away than worn to any other purpose. For my part, in very truth (as the cruel fathers among the Greeks were wont to do to the babes they could not foster) I could well find in my heart to cast out in some desert of forgetfulness

this child which I am loathed to father. (Sidney, 3)

At the end of the seventeenth century, Wentworth Dillon, the Earl of Roscommon, makes use of this same father/author metaphor in a verse essay on the translation of poetry. He writes:

> Examine how your Humour is inclin'd,
> And which the Ruling Passion of your mind;
> Then, seek a Poet who your way do's bend,
> And chuse an Author as you chuse a friend.
> United by this Sympathetic Bond,
> You grow Familiar, Intimate and Fond;
> Your thoughts, your Words, your Stiles, your Souls agree,
> No Longer his Interpreter, but He. (Quoted in Schnell, 1)

Lisa Schnell has noted, "Roscommon, not simply happy with his position as intimate friend of the text, usurps the original author's parental position.... For Roscommon, the issue of the authority of a translator is clearly a bit of a problem, and one which makes him nervous. That problem is most easily solved if the Earl can somehow just represent his perceived relationship to the target text in terms which both he and his audience would find perfectly obvious. [His solution is] Parenthood" (Schnell, 1).

John Milton is most conscious of this metaphor, or perhaps least conscious of the fact that he is using a metaphor and not writing an absolute truth. In Paradise Lost, Milton describes two situations in which men not only give birth, but give birth to women. In Book II, Sin tells her father, Satan, that she sprung from his mind. In Book VIII, Adam relates to the Angel Raphael how Eve was created from his rib. In both instances, the act of creation is preceded by a period of 'brain-storming' by the males. First they conceive woman mentally, then they

conceive her physically. Both women refer to their fathers as 'Author' after their births (Sin in II, 864 and Eve in IV, 635). Curiously enough, Adam (VIII,361), the Angels (III,374), and the Sun (V,188) all refer to God in the same manner.

There is one other reference to "author," and this appears on the title page of the poem itself: "The Author John Milton." Throughout the poem, Milton continually demands that a Muse -- the same one that witnessed creation and that he names Urania -- aid him in the composition of the poem. The Muse, having little other choice except to obey, visits Milton in the form of a light. This union leads to the creation of the poem. Yet the poem, as the title page tells us, clearly belongs to Milton. The effect here is that Milton, England's first "public" poet, is justifying the ways of God to men. The poem that he writes is to remind the men of England that they must be obedient to God. He is concerned with absolute truth. Yet, his poem, a most artificial way of delivering the truth, though its artificiality makes it all the more hallowed, contains a most obvious biological falsehood: men giving birth to women. As for the women in the poem, Sin gives birth to Death, and Eve gives birth to a race of fallen people. By using an inverted form of sexual reproduction as a metaphor for male creativity, Milton establishes male authority over women. A woman, like a poem, has to be authored by man. Indeed, one only needs to read Milton's divorce tracts to realize that a husband should be able to divorce his wife in the same way that he is able to abandon a

failed poem. In the subsequent chapters, I will examine these particular concerns in more detail. What follows is an examination of this metaphor, of its probable origins, and of its particular value to patriarchal ideology.

II

The key word in the metaphor of sexual reproduction is "sexual." Reproduction itself is viewed as exclusively female. whereas sexuality is not.[3] In fact, the word "sexuality" has patriarchal connotations. **Sexus**, latin for "a sex," is a derivative of the verb **secare**: to cut, to cut off, to divide. It was originally attributed either to a child or to the female sex as a division or as the "Other," to use de Beauvoir's term, of man (Partridge; Lewis). This use also calls to mind one of the more powerful patriarchal creation images, that of Eve being cut from Adam's rib. The first human sexual act, then, was one between man and God and resulted in the creation of woman. What this tale signifies is that the sexual metaphor of creativity is of patriarchal origin. It implies that the one who cuts or divides, the one who creates, carries a certain amount of authority over the one who is cut off or divided. Examples can be found in the first pages of the Bible:

> And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. (Genesis i, 3-5)

> And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God

> had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (Genesis ii, 21-23)[4]

In both these examples, creation implies a division or a cutting, after which the 'parent' assumes authority over the creation by naming it.

Mary O'Brien, in her highly informative book, The Politics of Reproduction, discusses why and how males throughout history have celebrated only the sexual act in reproduction and, in so doing, have been able to reverse figuratively the process of reproduction in order to assume the role of progenitor. O'Brien provides a Marxist reading of Hegel, Marx and Plato, and although this thesis is not a marxist reading of Paradise Lost, O'Brien does provide a good introduction to how and why males have appropriated the metaphor of sexual reproduction. More specifically, she provides a sound analysis of the anxiety experienced by males concerning issues of private and public realms and how males have overcome their anxiety by inverting the metaphor of sexual reproduction. In Milton's time, these anxieties and their solutions were of great concern.

In a chapter entitled "The dialectics of reproduction," O'Brien analyzes the writings of both Hegel and Marx only to discover that neither, in their essays on capitalism, consider reproduction and labour, gestation and birth, as productive labour. Yet it is Hegel, O'Brien writes, "who offered the profound and brilliant insight that labour is an active force in the mediation of man and the natural world, a mediation by which

the laborer and world are transformed in significant ways. In labouring, man in a real sense creates a world of his own and a history of himself and his species." However, for Hegel, in the reproductive process, copulation is the only real work, "for it is in 'love' that the race is reproduced" (O'Brien, 31). Hegel himself admits that, in copulation, the male is alienated from his seed. But, as O'Brien points out, the male is not only alienated from his seed, but also from his role as parent. Fatherhood is an abstract that presents itself as a reality, for there is no absolute way of determining the father, whereas there is for the mother. The child is a product of the mother and some man. O'Brien writes that

> The birth of the child is women's alienation of that unity to which men have no experiential access, but women's alienation from their seed is **mediated in labour**. Women do not, like men, have to take further action to annul their alienation from the race, for their labour confirms their integration. Not only does this fact differentiate male and female reproductive consciousness, it differentiates male and female temporal consciousness. The philosophers of history have shown little interest in this opposition of temporal modes of being, which is, after all, rather significant in any understanding of historical process. Female temporal consciousness is continuous,[5] whereas male temporal consciousness is discontinuous. (O'Brien, 32)

This notion of continuity is central to our problem of textual creativity. As mentioned earlier, after creating a text, the author becomes alienated from it because the text enters the world as a unit that can be interpreted in whatever way the reader wishes. To overcome this problem of alienation, politics becomes essential. Politics is that which institutes the laws of a society. This includes the laws of both the public and private

realms. Politics, however, occurs exclusively in the public realm, which tends to be patriarchal. The institution of marriage belongs to the private realm, though it is instituted in the public sphere. It is an institution developed by men to relieve the male of his anxiety of alienation from his child. Because the wife is isolated from the public realm and from other men, all her children can be considered to belong to the husband. He has sole access to her. This exclusive access is guaranteed by the public realm. In the animal world, many male animals participate in the upbringing of the offspring; human males are providers only because they choose to be and not because it is necessary. In fact, the public realm only awards the father rights to the child if he is a good father. Yet by acknowledging the good father and awarding him paternity, there has been a socio-historical process also of awarding him the reproductive labour power of the mother. "It is in a very real sense the appropriation of both a product of labour and of its 'means of production,' the woman and her reproductive labour power. Woman are not privatized solely to guard them from other potencies [other men]. They are privatized because their own reproductive labour power must be appropriated along with the child in whom it is embedded" (O'Brien, 56-60). In this way, it has been possible for male temporal consciousness to overcome discontinuity.

The private reader's role is instituted by the public. It has many names, but the most common has been to call it a muse.

Because the muse is female, she is called on to serve the male writer much in the same way that the wife in the patriarchal public sphere is called on to serve her husband. The muse is a "help meet" for the inspired poet. Yet, unlike the wife, the muse is invoked solely for her reproductive purposes. That the muse often is the partner who impregnates rather than is impregnated is not important for the public realm attributes the whole creative process to the good poet. If the public reader is familiar with the tropes of the writer, and if these tropes are reiterated in the public realm in various texts to encourage familiarity, then alienation is diminished. As O'Brien notes, since the time of Plato and Aristotle, politics has been perceived as the great stabilizer "over time and for the regulation of both property relations and the social relations of reproduction... [which] require a political-legal context...[that] mere genetic continuity evidently could not provide" (O'Brien, 33).

Like any text, a political-legal context, when it becomes writing, assumes authority; it becomes natural law. As O'Brien analyzes the works of Hegel and Marx, she discovers that both find the oppression of women naturally justified. This naturally-justified oppression begins with an idea she terms "male potency." Male potency is a result of the alienation of the male seed. For it is then that, in social terms, a series of oppositions appears. Standing opposed to each other are:

1. The man and the child, who may or may not be his;

2. The woman who labors to bring forth her child, and the man who does not labour;

3. The man who is separated from biological continuity, and the woman whose integration with the natural process and genetic time is affirmed in reproductive labour;

4. Following from 1, individual man and all other possible potencies, men in general. (O'Brien, 36)

O'Brien sets up these oppositions for two reasons. One is to describe how male potency evolves from this alienation; the other is to introduce the idea of a reproductive consciousness or the reproductive imagination.[6]

From this table of oppositions, we find that, from the male perspective, there arises a problem of the uncertainty of fatherhood. There is a certain amount of freedom in this uncertainty for it allows the male to absolve himself of any responsibility. The pleasure is his to remember. Yet, as a collective, there has been a "strenuous masculine activity" to negate this uncertainty in the form of institutions; as noted above, marriage is perhaps the chief institution. However, in attempting to negate this uncertainty, the role of the male in male/female relationships must be privileged. The word "conception," from the latin **concipere**, to take together, to contain, to gather, as in **concipere semina**, (of a woman) to gather the male seed, is first an active verb. Yet after Aristotle's biology, "to conceive" became a passive verb implying acceptance of the male seed, of male domination (Partridge). The structure that reverses 'natural' events to promote male supremacy, O'Brien calls **male potency**. However,

> we cannot say that men 'naturally' understood copulation not only as pleasurable, but as an exercise in domination and perhaps even priestly or political duty. Pleasurability is an immediate property of copulation, whereas dominance and superiority are not. The notion of potency requires a historical development; it is a complex which goes far beyond mere capacity to impregnate. Potency is a masculine triumph over men's natural alienation from the process of reproduction. (O'Brien, 49)

In another chapter, entitled "Creativity and procreativity," O'Brien returns to Plato and the notion of second nature. The male experience is determined through man's biological nature (first nature), which "exerts constraints" on his ability to develop his socio-historical (second) nature. "Women have been perceived as integrated with first nature so completely that they do not need a second nature. As the expression of second nature takes place in the political realm, this is one reason why politics is a man's world." Women, in the realm of first nature are in a sense powerless for they are a necessity. However, in the realm of second nature, "man makes himself" (O'Brien, 118).

Nature is defined by O'Brien as organic/biological and transcendental/essential. In Greek thought, nature is "the legitimizer of ethical lives and political organizations." She is also the giver of reason. And it was through reason that men could understand their two natures. Yet "the unification of first and second nature required a bit of all-too-human help. It required...a second birth, qualitatively different from biological birth." There developed a tradition of male passage into the realm of second nature, a passage that is very

different from, and requires no assistance from, female reproductive labour. Here men became citizens and participated in politics. In all these institutions where male passage occurs, O'Brien writes, the creation myths involve a movement from chaos to order. "Like the patriarchal composers of the book of Genesis, the intellectuals of antiquity found ambiguity and confusion in the movement from 'an order and continuity' grounded in human procreativity to a surrogate 'order and continuity' grounded in male creative potency. It was precisely because the latter is not 'natural' that ideological inversions were required to make it seem so" (O'Brien, 119-123).

It was Plato, O'Brien reminds us, who perceived that metaphysics could solve the problem of male alienation in reproduction. "Male praxis can denigrate physical birth and restrict access to women, but male supremacy separated from genetic continuity must equip itself with ideological principles of continuity, and also a non-biological account of beginning" (O'Brien, 126). In Plato's Symposium, Socrates puts forward the notion of intellectual creativity as a natural superiority to "carnal procreativity." Here, at a banquet, Socrates and his friends discuss the meaning of love. Love is described as a force that is greater than death for people, even women, are prepared to die for love. Almost immediately, love is divided into types: common and heavenly. Heavenly love is motherless; "she firstly had no share of the female, but only the male, and she loves philosophy and virtue in general." Common love is only

physical gratification with no regard for man's soul or mind.

Here Plato has moved the conception of love "as life-force totally divorced from biological reproduction to a conception of single male parenthood, in which conception has nothing to do with women because female sexuality presumably sullies the purity of the masculine moral potency and philosophical prowess" (O'Brien, 127). The meal continues, as does the discussion. More tales of love are told until finally Socrates himself speaks. Again, O'Brien notes the structure of the dialogue. Socrates' speech is preceded by the speech of a youth, who describes love as a wise poet. He is followed by a drunken Alcibiades, who has come late and has not heard Socrates speak. "The suggestion that Socrates really **is** Love, and that wisdom is the true life-force, are emphasized in a skillful literary way. Alcibiades's account of his encounter with Socrates, which gives birth to virtue by sexual abstention, is structurally similar to Socrates' earlier account of the encounter in which Poverty and Plenty give birth to Love by sexual indulgence." Socrates tells the story, O'Brien continues,

> of how Eros' mother, Poverty, hungry and cold and miserable, had crept into the bed of his father, Plenty, who was luxuriantly sleeping off a [large consumption of nectar].... Poverty seduced Plenty, and their child, Eros, was therefore a golden boy, the mean between his mother's poor nature and the rich nature of his father. This paternal nature was one which loved the true, the good and the beautiful, a nature which belonged to a great hunter who hunted wisdom... and which was fertile of ideas and dedicated to philosophy. It is from the nature of this splendid and potent creature that Eros gets his life, but because his mother's nature is deficient in the capacity to give life, the life he inherits from his father is always dribbling away. Thus the nature of the father is to

> give life abundantly, the nature of the resourceless mother is to deny life. So poor is she that the **actual sex-act is all she has to contribute to life.** (O'Brien, 128-129. Her emphasis.)

This story is followed by the drunken Alcibiades's attempt to seduce Socrates. Socrates spurns the sexual advances of Alcibiades but accepts his story that Alcibiades was only hoping that, in a sexual encounter, some of Socrates's wisdom might rub off. Socrates then counsels Alcibiades and tells him that it is the meeting of minds from which emerges the birth of what is essentially human. O'Brien writes that "Temperance conceived in true wisdom is the blessed product of all-male creative intercourse which transcends the sexuality and messiness of procreativity. The stretched-out intellect has replaced the palpitating womb as the cradle of the life-force" (O'Brien,129).

By bringing the 'palpitating womb' inside the male mind, Plato has transcended the problem of alienation. Here, the second kind of reader, the Other who reads the mental inscriptions of Socrates's mind, is similar to the first kind of reader, Socrates's audience. Both are familiar with the same tropes; both are of the same womb. The female Muse is still necessary for the metaphor to function -- like Poverty, she is there to supply the sexual act -- but she remains a trope. And as a trope, she has been conceived by an author, who, with his male companions, can continue to conceive more tropes. Since trope reproduction takes place in a political -- all male -- sphere, the author is the essential life force.

In concluding the Symposium, Socrates explains that his views

on love "have been culled from a wise woman." Plato is using a patriarchal literary device: "he puts the argument for male superiority into the mouth of a woman" (O'Brien, 130). The old woman, Diotima, teaches Socrates that love is not really a god, but a mediator between mortals and immortals. He "seeks wisdom because he does not have it, as gods do, but is not wholly without it, as some mortals are." Yet, for "good" love to persist over time, it must continuously be begotten. This is possible because all men are pregnant in body and soul. Begetting "is related to the quest for beauty, which is certain and permanent and mortal nature has only one way to ensure immortality, which is to replace the old with the young." Knowledge, too, is mortal. Thus, it is love of immortality, which comes from love of knowledge (for one cannot love what one does not know), that leads to fame. And fame is more valuable than children:

> So those who are pregnant in body turn to women and are enamoured in this way, and thus, by begetting children, secure for themselves, so they think, immortality and memory and happiness, 'providing all things for the time to come,' but those who are pregnant in soul, for there are some who conceive in the soul more than in body, what is proper for the soul to conceive and bear. And what is proper? -- wisdom and virtue in general -- to this class belong all creative poets, and those artists and craftsmen who are said to be inventive. But much the greatest wisdom... and the most beautiful, is that which is concerned with the ordering of cities and homes, which we call temperance and justice. (O'Brien, 171)

As O'Brien notes, it may be argued that Plato's Symposium is only a poetic metaphor born as a play on the double meaning of "conception." But the play is not two-way. Socrates attempts to

assert that "the abstract proliferations of male ideas have a more concrete reality" than the products of reproductive labour. Rather, O'Brien believes, Plato is "struggling with the biologically based realities of male reproductive consciousness" (O'Brien, 132).

III

This struggle with the limits of biological reality, particularly evident in the metaphor of male sexual reproduction, has continued throughout the centuries. In the seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes was aware of this anxiety when he claimed that the first quality peculiar to the nature of man is "to be inquisitive into the Causes of the Events they see... [and] secondly, upon the sight of anything that hath a Beginning, to think also it had cause, which determined the same to begin, then when it did, rather than sooner or later" (Hobbes, 54). These peculiar qualities are evident not only in Milton, who returns to time's beginning to explain the cause of man's fallen state, but also in Thomas Browne's teleological writings. In his Religio medici, Browne writes that

> There is but one first cause; ...every Essence, created or uncreated, hath its finall cause, and some positive end both of its Essence and operation; This is the cause I grope after in the works of nature, on this hangs the providence of God..... This visible world is but a picture of the invisible, wherein as in a pourtract, things are not truely, but on equivocall shapes, and as they counterfeit some reall substance in that invisible fabrick.... [God reveals himself through] his servant Nature, that universall and publick Manuscript, that lies expans'd unto the eyes of all. (Bodemer, 197)

Browne was not only an influential theologian, but was also "a physician and inquiring student of embryology" (Bodemer, 197). He was not the only one. To account for all knowledge, for everything in the universe, many philosophers and theologians returned to the sciences. This led to an explosion in the field of natural science not seen since Aristotle. Embryology became a favorite. The earlier century had seen a new world explored and claimed.[7] Now explorers were returning to the body. Influenced by Bacon's scientific method of observation, any anatomical structure related to the cause of man was sliced, diced, and labelled. In embryology, wrote Thomas Browne, it was hoped that "that great work whose wonders are only second unto those of the Creation, and a close apprehension of the one, might perhaps afford a glimmering light, and crepusculous glance of the other" (Bodemer, 199). But, as we shall see, embryological research was performed not so much to discover the cause for beginnings, but more so to reaffirm the status quo.

In their quest for the causes of beginnings, scientists did not have to look far. Browne himself calls Nature a "publick Manuscript." In reading this "Manuscript," scientists, philosophers, and theologians not only absorbed its metaphors, but, in so doing, they followed Hobbes's third peculiar quality of the nature of man:

> whereas...Man observeth how one Event hath been produced by another; and remembereth in them Antecedence and Consequence; And when he cannot assure himselfe of the true causes of things, (for the causes of good and evill fortune for the most part are invisible,) he **supposes causes of them**, either such as his own fancy suggesteth;

> or trusteth to the Authority of other men, such as he thinks to be his friends, and wiser than himselfe. (Hobbes, 54. His emphasis.)

Without the help of a microscope, scientists returned to the language of their authorities: Aristotle and Aquinas.

Mary O'Brien's notion of male potency can be seen already in the work of Aristotle. Aristotle found no difficulty in privileging the male role in the male/female relationship. In his On The Generation of Animals, Aristotle declares that "woman provides matter for the embryo, while the man gives the matter form and motion.... The menstrual blood is the 'prime matter'" (Warner, 40). However, he "believes the male semen to be made up of water and **pneuma**, which is hot air. This air is not one of the four elements, but more divine than they are. It is the sublunary analogue of ether. This heat is not that ordinary fire which does not generate life, but is like the heat of the sun, which is known to generate life.... What the male contributes is simply this hot, divine, fertile air" (Morsink, 112).

In the thirteenth century, Aristotle's biological work was accepted into the church through the works of St. Thomas Aquinas. In his Summa Theologiae, Aquinas writes:

> It was absolutely necessary to make woman, for the reason Scripture mentions, as a help for man.... [As the life of] man...is directed to a nobler function still (nobilius opus vitae), that of understanding things...there was more reason than ever in man for emphasizing the distinction between the sexes, which was done by producing woman separately from man.... Only as regards nature in the individual is the female something defective and **manqué**. For the active power in the seed of the male tends to produce something like itself, perfect masculinity; but the procreation of the female is the result...of the debility of the active power.... With reference to nature

> in the species as a whole, the female is not something manqué, but is according to the tendency of nature, and is directed to the work of procreation. Now the tendency of the nature of a species as a whole derives from God, who is the general author of nature (universalis auctor naturae). (Aquinas, Vol II, 92, i)

The language used by these two authorities affirms the basic tropes that will dominate seventeenth-century reproductive understanding. "Pneuma" translates into Latin as "spiritus" and into English as "spirit." And Aquinas introduces the expressions "the active power of the seed of the male," and "author of nature." This vocabulary constitutes semen as the active force in generation because of its divine association, an active force in all creativity. Man, unlike woman, is "directed to a nobler function...that of understanding things." If man understands woman, if he knows her, then she can become a tool of his creative imagination, a tool to further his understanding of other 'things.' She also becomes an instrument with which to create more men. Marina Walker writes that "The Angelic Doctor... accepted Aristotelian biology with far-reaching consequences on the attitude of the woman's role in European society. He saw man as the vital source of life and woman solely as the incubator, the blood transfusion unit" (Warner, 39). After Aquinas and Aristotle, the linkage of semen and spirit was not questioned again until the seventeenth century.

Essentially, there were two streams of thought that influenced embryology: atomism, and neoplatonism. Both schools were influenced by William Harvey's <u>De generatione animalium</u>, published in 1653. Harvey is known in this century for his

discovery that blood circulates in the body. When he first published his findings on the circulation of blood, they were dismissed as foolishness. However, after a period of twenty years had passed, Harvey's work was generally accepted. Therefore, when he published De generatione animalium, his work was approved without question. This is unfortunate because Harvey, lacking a microscope, was unable to trace the movement of semen to the uterus, and therefore had to resort to metaphor. Thus he concludes: "The woman after contact with the spermatic fluid in coitu seems to receive influence, and to become fecundated without the cooperation of any sensible corporeal agent, in the same way as iron touched by the magnet is endowed with its powers and can attract other iron to itself" (Farley, 17).

The first large theoretical influence on embryology, atomism, was emphasized in the works of Kenelm Digby and Nathaniel Highmore.[8] Both believe that, the seed of the male and female were composed of different atoms that when acted upon by a vital force, developed mechanically with the aid of a formative force already inside the atom. Digby writes that

> All generation is made of a fitting, but remote, homogenial compounded substance; upon which outward Agents working, in the due course of nature change it into another substance, quite different from the first, and make it less homogenal than the first was. (Bodemer, 187)

This "homogenial substance" was described more in detail by Highmore:

> Highmore describes the seed as composed of small, indivisible particles.... [There are] two varieties of

> seminal atoms: spiritual atoms from the male and material atoms from the female. The gonads extract atoms belonging to every part of the body from the circulating blood.
>
> In higher forms, embryogenesis occurs **in utero**, where two seeds coalesce, the feminine material atoms acting `to fix and cement the spiritual Atomes together, that they might mutually cohere the one to the other; the Masculine,...to actuate, enliven, and to act for all the rest.' (Bodemer, 189)

Digby and Highmore's theories of "vital" and "formative" forces could not be verified empirically. However, they believed they lived in a ordered and rational world, and since the male in the male/female relationship was rational, these forces were naturally attributed to the male.

Neoplatonism, the other influence on embryology, was introduced through the writings of the Cambridge Platonists. In response to Hobbesian materialism, they were "seeking a reconciliation of a mechanistic philosophy with contemporary religious beliefs" (Bodemer, 196). In 1750, Thomas Hobbes had written that

> nothing can be Unjust. The notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have there no place. Where there is no common Power, there is no Law: where no Law, no Injustice. Force, and Fraud, are in warre the two Cardinall vertues. Justice, and Injustice are none of the Faculties neither of the Body, nor Mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his Senses, and Passions. They are Qualities, that relate to men in Society, not in Solitude. It is consequent also to the same condition, that there be no Propriety, no Dominion, no Mine and Thine distinct; but onely that to be every mans, that he can get; for so long as he can keep it. (Hobbes, p.66)

This deterministic statement flew in the face of the Cambridge Platonists, who, as spiritualists, believed there existed an intended causality for man and therefore that an absolute

morality was essential. If there were no purpose for man, no absolute morality, why should Milton bother to justify the ways of God to men? Benjamin Whithcote argued on behalf of all spiritualists when he wrote that "They are therefore greatly mistaken, who in religion **oppose** points of Reason and matters of Faith: as if Nature went one way, and the Author of Nature went another" (Bodemer, 2Ø1). It was through Neoplatonism that the natural and spiritual phenomena could be reconciled.

Neoplatonism is a metaphysical system involving an hierarchical order. Developed by Plotinus in the third century, it is an interpretation of Plato's Timaeus, which was then reinterpreted and christianized by an Italian philosopher of the sixteenth century, Marsilio Ficino. At the top of the hierarchical ladder, in Plotinus's system, is a "Being that lies beyond reason and beyond reality." Ficino later associated this Being with God. Below this Being, is the Intelligence of the Mind (**Nous**), followed by the Soul, the Body and finally Matter and inert Matter. Inert Matter is regarded as evil for it is devoid of the Being.

The system works through a process of emanations or emissions from the Being. The first of the emanations is the **Nous**, a perfect image of the Being but inferior to it. Here dwells the archetypical Form or Idea; here Beauty is comprehended. From out of the **Nous** emanates the Soul,

> which is all separate forms and one overarching meta-Form... all individual souls and the soul of the world. The Soul looks upward towards the **Nous** and downward towards Body, which emanates from it and with which it

> joins; thus the Soul is the mediating agency between the intelligible and phenomenal world. In that lower world of things it may be weighed down by lust and sensuality; this happens when the Soul is dominated by Body, a condition from which it can escape only when it is instructed by virtue. Virtue enables it to reassert its intelligible nature and to satisfy its deep, passionate yearning to return to its origins, to **Nous**, and ultimately to the One.
>
> (Mintz, 145)

Both atomistic and neoplatonic theories of sexual reproduction only served to emphasize the metaphors of male sexual reproduction. A writer who looked to the atomistic theory would find that his metaphor could be justified because the spiritual atoms of the male contained the necessary vital forces to inspire, to put into motion, either the material atoms of the female in sexual reproduction or the grammatical atoms for textual production. The neoplatonic theory also allowed for both types of production. Since the semen contained the soul and was derived from the male, sexual reproduction involved the Nous passing through the semen/soul into the body of the woman. "The less perfect were generated out of the more perfect" (Mintz, 145). The principle Cambridge Platonists, Henry More, Benjamin Whichcote and Ralph Cudworth, "aware of the unity of different kinds of truth...strove to maintain a union of faith and reason. Reason, they argued, was simultaneously an avenue toward the understanding of natural phenomena and the apprehension of spiritual truths" (Bodemer, 201). They achieved this union through the invention of a new scientific language.[9] The scientific name for this notion of semen/soul was "plastic spirits or seminal forms" (Bodemer, 201). Henry More defines

"seminal forms" as

> a created Spirit organizing duly-prepared Matter into life and vegetation proper to this or the other kind of Plant.... For in that it is a Spirit, it can move Matter intrinsecally, or at least direct the motion thereof: But in that it is not an Omnipotent Spirit, but Finite and Created, its power may well be restrained to duly-prepared Matter both for vital union and motion.... And the same first Cause of all things that gives them a power of uniting with & moving of matter duly prepared, may also set such laws to this motion, that when it lights on matter fit for it, it will produce such and such a Plant, that is to say, it will shape the matter into such Figure, Colour and other properties.... This is the First degree of Particular Life in the world. (More, 46-47. His emphasis.)

The Cambridge Platonists believed that the divine intelligence, or plastic nature, which motivated the plastic spirits, was necessary to assemble the matter of the womb. This plastic nature was also the force that assembled the words of a text. In this sense, males were always chief parent of whatever they produced. Male temporal consciousness was scientifically demonstrated to be continuous; it had causality. Ralph Cudworth, in his book The Intellectual System of the Universe, "assigns a comparable role to plastic nature, maintaining it to be 'absurd and ridiculous' to account for the formation and organization of animal bodies by fortuity, without any final or intending causality" (Bodemer, 204-205). It is necessary to conclude, writes Cudworth,

> That either in efformation and organization of the bodies of animals, as well as the other phenomena, every thing comes to pass fortuitously, and happens to be as it is, without the guidance and direction of any mind or understanding; or else, that God himself doth all immediately, and as it were with his own hands, form the body of every gnat or fly, insect or mite, as of other animals in generation. (Bodemer, 203)

In rejecting chance, or Hobbesian determination, for predestination, Cudworth assigns both biological and intellectual creativity to the male. As in the metaphor of male sexual reproduction, in the study of embryology, the woman would again become a tool for this creativity.

It is the ideology that underlies these medical texts that makes evident what is crucial to understanding how the metaphors of Milton and his contemporaries where accepted or rejected. Milton, after all, was a "public" poet. His contemporaries, both the Cambridge Platonists and the medical scientists, were also "public" figures. And, since they were "public" figures, they were concerned foremost with politics. When seventeenth-century embryological science found itself stuck, unable to observe conception, they turn to the language of male potency, a "public" language that all educated men understood. For this reason, the chief enemy of those who searched for absolute truth was Thomas Hobbes, who, though he believed in absolute truth, believed that the only truth men were capable of comprehending was one that they conceived themselves. Hobbes had written that

> **True** and **False** are attributes of Speech, not of Things. And where Speech is not, there is neither **Truth** nor **Falsehood**.... Seeing then that truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affirmations, a man that seeketh precise **truth**, had need to remember what every name he uses stand for; and to place it accordingly. And therefore...men begin at settling the significations of their words; which settling of significations, they call **Definitions**. (Hobbes, 15. His emphasis.)

He reminded the spiritualists that their truths were just definitions, capable of being changed further down the road.

Rejecting Hobbes, they turned to Plato, whose definition of a transcendental soul seemed to exist outside textuality. In so doing, they accepted many other Platonic ideals.

IV

Thomas Ellwood may not have understood the full, desired effect of Milton's Paradise Lost, but he had little difficulty in acknowledging Milton as a writer capable of teaching man the way to Paradise. Milton himself certainly believed this. What allowed Ellwood to acknowledge this ability in Milton was his awareness of Milton's command over language. All knowledge is language, to paraphrase Thomas Hobbes. In describing Paradise, Milton must assume knowledge of it. Yet this is very close to, if not altogether, blasphemy. Thus, Milton invokes the muse who was present from the very beginning to tell him of things that are "invisible to mortal sight." The Muse, whom Milton commands to reveal Paradise to him, is named by him and therefore claimed by him. She serves as a trope that allows Milton to have a consciousness that expands from beginning to present. In literature, this is not unnatural. But Milton is more than a writer of literature; he is England's first public poet. He is justifying the ways of God to men. This is not an interpretation of the story of creation, but a recording of the story as told to him by the Word of God. Yet within this great English poem, men give birth to women: something entirely unnatural, yet never questioned. In claiming knowledge of woman, in naming her,

marriage, and not because institutions were concerned with the economic welfare of unwed mothers. A womanizer is man to be respected, while his child is a bastard, and its mother a whore. I can still recall the shock I experienced the first time I read Gilbert and Gubar's opening line of Madwoman. Only later did I realize that I had also always assumed that a Muse is female. Yet, if a Muse is female, what inspires women writers?

4. All biblical excerpts are from the King James Bible.

5. Writes O'Brien: "Labour...is a mediation between mother and nature and mother and child; but it is also a **temporal** mediation between the cyclical time of nature and unilinear genetic time. Woman's reproductive consciousness is a consciousness that the child is hers, but also a consciousness that she herself was born of a woman's labour, that labour confirms genetic coherence and species continuity. Male reproductive consciousness is splintered and discontinuous, and cannot be mediated within the reproductive process. (O'Brien, 59).

6. O'Brien's notion of a reproductive imagination serves an interesting introduction to a possible new reproductive metaphor. Reproductive labour is different from (head and hand) productive labour, and it involves a consciousness that is different. "But maternal labour does confirm for women the conception of the child as **her** child" (O'Brien, 36). The child, as a product of the mother, as a product of biological reproduction, has always been defined as product not of rational will. One reason for this is that, biological reproduction does not fit neatly into Marx's parable of the architect and the bee: "what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in his imagination" (O'Brien, 36). Writes O'Brien:

> No one denies a motherly imagination, which foresees the child in a variety of ways.... Maternal imagination may also be fraught with anxiety about another mouth to feed, another dependence to bear. In other words, female reproductive consciousness knows that a child will be born, knows what a child is, and speculates in general terms about this child's potential. Yet mother and architect are quite different. The woman cannot realize her visions, cannot make them come true, by virtue of reproductive labour in which she involuntarily engages, if at all. Unlike the architect, her will does not influence the shape of her product. Unlike the bee, she knows that her product, like herself, will have a history. Like the architect, she knows what she is doing; like the bee, she cannot help what she is doing.(Karl Marx, Capital, V.1, Pt.3, Ch.7, Sec.1, p.198)

Although the reproductive consciousness differs from that of the bee and that of the architect, O'Brien notes that it is of a dialectical nature. And since it is dialectical, it is structured similarly to human consciousness, which Hegel also described as dialectical. "We want to extend and reinforce the theory," writes O'Brien, "that human consciousness is dialectical by arguing that the most primordial of human experiences are dialectically structured, but there are two of them, the reproduction of the self and the reproduction of the race, which stand in opposition to one another" (O'Brien, p.38).

7. Louis Montrose has recently published an essay concerning sixteenth-century explorers and their curious way of attributing feminine characteristics to their newly-discovered lands. Specifically, he cites the work of Sir Walter Raleigh, who in The Discoverie...of Guiana wrote: "Guiana is a countrey that hath yet her maidenhead." Writes Montrose:

> "Western desire" ...is written upon the putatively "blank page" of the New World, and [it does so] by specifying the ideological configurations of gender and social estate, as well as national, religious, and/or ethnic identities, that are brought into play during any particular process of textualization. (Montrose, 7)

8. Kenelm Digby, Two Treatises (1644) and Of Bodies, and of Mans Soul (london, 1669); Nathaniel Highmore, THe History of Generation (London, 1651); cited by Bodemer.

9. Bodemer cites Joseph Glanvill, a contemporary of the Cambridge Platonists who, in his book, The Vanity of Dogmatizing, comments on their notion of plastic nature: "A fine word, but what it is, and how it works, and whose it is, we cannot learn; no, not by any return into the Womb" (Bodemer, 206).

CHAPTER TWO

Adam and Satan Give Birth

I

In Book V of Milton's Paradise Lost, God announces to his angels that he has chosen his only Son to be his "Vice-gerent":

> Hear all ye Angels, Progeny of Light,
> Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
> Hear my Decree, which unrevok't shall stand.
> This day I have begot whom I declare
> My only Son, and on this holy Hill
> Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
> At my right hand; your Head I him appoint;
> And by my Self have sworn to him shall bow
> All knees in Heav'n, and shall confess him Lord:
> Under his great Vice-gerent Reign abide
> United as one individual Soul
> For ever happy: him who disobeys
> Mee disobeys, breaks union, and that day
> Cast out from darkness, deep ingulft, his place
> Ordain'd without redemption, without end. (V, 600-617)

The reaction of Satan to this proclamation leads not only to civil war in Heaven, but eventually to Man's expulsion from Paradise. This declaration, of course, occurs at the chronological beginning of Paradise Lost. Much critical discussion has focused on the theological implications of this speech: it appears that in affirming the Son as Lord, God necessarily rejects all those opposed to the Son. Therefore, God is responsible for the creation not only of all that is Good, but, indirectly, of all that is Evil as well. This is highly

problematic for in basic Christian orthodoxy God did not create Evil. Yet we must remember that Satan, in Paradise Lost, chooses to disobey the Word of God. His disobedience can occur only outside of God's law and it is there where the creation of all that is Evil takes place. Evil is the absence of Good. It is not a coincidence that "justify" finds its etymological roots in the Latin word **ius**, which means "law." God is author of the universe and the law is the Word of God. England is part of that universe and subject to the Word of God. Disobedience is unjustified. For this reason, Milton, public poet and propagandist, is concerned with the stability of language. In his attempt to justify the ways of God to man, Milton must be specific in his choice of words. Like Moses, Milton is bringing the Law of God to England, which, after all, has just emerged from a civil war, a war also fought on paper and concerning Law. If Milton can teach his fellow Englishmen that the Civil War was the result of man's disobedience to God, he will have justified the ways of God to men. Arguments surrounding this implication have lead naturally to an analysis of the language Milton attributes to God.

Milton's use of the word "begot" in reference to God's own creation of his Son in the words "This day I have begot whom I declare / My only Son" (6Ø3-Ø4) has intrigued many critics.[1] Is God speaking figuratively, or does he actually beget his Son as he speaks, thus implying that he created his Son after he had created the other angels? Writing in 1962, Maurice Kelley addresses this theological-linguistic difficulty:

> Generation concerns the begetting of the Son; creation, the making of the highest heaven and the material universe. These two are separate and distinct species of external efficiency; and although God made the son from his own substance, and although the **materia prima** of the universe proceeded incorruptible from God, Milton...nowhere identified the divine substance of generation with the original matter of creation, or held that the Son was the material cause of the universe. The Son...is not he 'from whom' but rather he 'by whom [**per quem**]' all things are made; and to Milton the preposition **per** signified only a delegated power, a secondary cause. (Kelley, 93-94)

The Son mediates between God and all of God's creation; Christ appears before God, intercedes on behalf of mankind, and offers himself as a sacrifice in place of man. The notion of the Son as mediator is consistent in the poem as well as in Milton's The Christian Doctrine (Kelley, 102). The begetting of the Son in these lines is figurative:

> It is...a theological fiction introduced by Milton to give a motivating force to his epic -- to furnish Satan with an excuse for resentment; and this resentment originates...from his figurative generation; for in Paradise Lost V, 603-606, the Father can be properly said, in one sense of the word, to beget the Son, because in proclaiming the Son ruler and vicegerent over the angels, he is metaphorically generating a new thing -- a king. (Kelley, 105)

Milton, in attributing a metaphor of figurative generation to the Word of God, professes that God speaks and acts in metaphors. In the metaphor of figurative generation, Milton sanctions the power of language, of metaphor, of the Word, over both creation and generation. The Son, "the first-born of every creature," is the metaphor for God on earth; he is both a physical and a textual metaphor.[2] The Son is the Word made incarnate. God's spoken Word is to be realized through the

actions of his begotten Son, a situation Milton clearly demonstrates in Book VII. Here, God decides to create a World of men so that the split that has resulted from the heavenly internecine war eventually can be healed. Yet God himself creates the World figuratively, through his Word, by his begotten Son:

> And thou my Word, begotten Son, by thee
> This I preform, speak thou, and be it done
> ...So spake th' Almighty, and to what he spake
> His Word, the Filial Godhead, gave effect.
> Immediate are the Acts of God, more Swift
> Than time or motion, but to human ears
> Cannot without process of speech be told,
> So told as earthly notion can receive. (V, 163-164, 174-179)

What follows from this passage is a description of the creation of the World. But, as Milton himself says, this is a description designed for "human ears" -- a metaphorical description. Metaphors are the tools of poets and they often deceive, as Hobbes has warned us. Yet, if all men agree on the meaning of a metaphor, the metaphor can be stabilized. And both Hobbes and Milton agree that the Son is the Word incarnate. For this reason, God, in Paradise Lost, can say that he has begot his Son, the Word, and only atheists (and post-structuralists) will object. But it is in this metaphor that the notion of a male having the ability to give birth is affirmed: Father begets Son through language.

Figurative generation initially serves as a metaphor for the divine creative process. The creator conceives and then orders what he conceives into existence. Conception takes place in the divine mind, and what is conceived is expelled through language.

God is male in Paradise Lost. When he conceives man, he creates man in his own image. Man, of course, seeks to imitate God. Milton's stylized divine creative process becomes the basis for a metaphor of male procreativity. This male ability to give birth in Paradise Lost in no way parallels female sexual reproduction. Rather, males appropriate sexual reproduction. All Milton's male characters conceive mentally and beget almost instantaneously.

The divine creative process is described by Milton for human ears in Book VII. Here, God creates the world through language. Christ, the Word of God, enters Chaos, gathers it together, and then orders it by dividing it into heaven and earth, day and night, water and land, and so on. Chaos, however, exists outside the Word of God. Book II gives us our first description of Chaos. It is a dark "Illimitable Ocean" without boundary and time. It is

> where eldest **Night**
> And **Chaos**, Ancestors of Nature, hold
> Eternal Anarchy, amidst the noise
> Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.
> For hot, cold, moist, and dry, four Champions fierce
> Strive here for Maistry, and to Battle bring
> Thir embryon Atoms....
> **Chaos** Umpire sits,
> And by decision more imbroils the fray
> By which he Reigns: next him high Arbiter
> **Chance** governs all....[Here was]
> The Womb of nature and perhaps her Grave,
> Of neither Sea, nor Shore, nor Air, nor Fire,
> But all these in thir pregnant causes mixt
> Confus'dly, and which thus must ever fight,
> Unless th'Almighty Maker them ordain
> His dark materials to create more Worlds. (II, 894-916)

The Abyss is a place of noise. Noise is non-language or

language without law. In describing the "noise of endless wars," Milton stresses that Chaos is a realm without a stable language and thus a realm without authority: "**Chaos** Umpire sits, / And by decision more imbroils the fray." Because this is a realm outside the Word of God, it is irrational. It is also woman-like. This is necessary because Milton's creator is male; he naturally assigns female attributes to the Abyss. Milton's reference to the "Womb of nature" recalls seventeenth-century embryological terminology: both atomist and neoplatonists view the womb as a container of disorganized material in need of some **vis formatrix**. Conveniently, this life-giving force brings with it the language of authority:

> Heav'n op'n'd wide...to let forth
> The King of Glory in his powerful Word
> And Spirit coming to create new Worlds.
> On heav'nly ground they stood, and from the shore
> They view'd the vast immeasurable Abyss
> Outrageous as a Sea, dark, wasteful, wild....
> Silence, ye troubl'd waves, and thou Deep, peace,
> Said then th' Omnific Word, your discord end:
> Nor stay'd, but on the Wings of Cherubim
> Uplifted, in Paternal Glory rode
> Far into **Chaos**, and the World unborn... (VII, 205-220)
>
> Thus God the Heav'n created, thus the Earth,
> Matter unform'd and void: Darkness profound
> Cover'd th' Abyss: but in the wat'ry calm
> His brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread,
> And vital virtue infus'd, and vital warmth
> Throughout the fluid Mass, but downward purg'd
> The black tartareous cold Infernal dregs
> Adverse to life; then founded, then conglob'd
> Like things to like, the rest to several place
> Disparted, and between spun out the Air,
> And Earth self-balanc't on her Centre hung. (VII, 232-242)

The Spirit of lines 209 and 235, as we shall see in the next chapter, is the same Spirit invoked by Milton to serve as his

Muse. The Spirit is the **vis formatrix** that enters the womb-like abyss and infuses it with life. Milton's vocabulary again echoes that of seventeenth-century embryologists. Yet, here, the Spirit is also the "Omnific Word" that gives Law to noisy matter. As mentioned earlier, the Latin root of "to conceive" has the meaning "to gather together." This is precisely what the "brooding wings of the Spirit of God" accomplish. The "Omnific Word" enters the Abysmal womb of nature, gathers together the noisy embryonic Atoms, and, having "conglob'd / Like things to like," the Word of God names them by dividing them:

> Let there be Light, said God, and forthwith Light
> Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure
> Sprung from the Deep, and from her Native East
> To journey through the airy gloom began,
> Spher'd in a radiant Cloud, for yet the Sun
> Was not; shee in a cloudy Tabernacle
> Sojourn'd the while. God saw the Light was good;
> And light from darkness by the Hemisphere
> Divided: Light the Day, and Darkness Night
> He nam'd. Thus was the first Day Ev'n and Morn.
> (VII, 243-252)

> Again, God said, let there be Firmament
> Amid the Waters, and let it divide
> The Waters from the Waters: and God made
> The Firmament, expanse of liquid, pure,
> Transparent, Elemental Air, diffus'd
> In circuit to the utter most convex
> Of this great Round. (VII, 261-267)

> The Earth was form'd, but in the Womb as yet
> Of Waters, Embryon immature involv'd,
> Appear'd not: Over all the face of Earth
> Main Ocean flow'd, not idle, but with warm
> Prolific humor soft'ning all her Globe,
> Fermented the great Mother to conceive,
> Satiate with genial moisture, when God said,
> Be gather'd now ye Waters under Heav'n
> Into one place, and let dry Land appear.
> Immediately the Mountains huge appear
> Emergent, and thir broad bare backs upheave
> Into the Clouds, thir tops ascend the sky. (VII, 276-287)

And so on. God, through his Word, divides and names. Earth, a liquid egg, lies passively in anticipation of God's Word. When God does speak, land from water emerges immediately. This instantaneity may be related to the male reproductive consciousness. The sex act is the only act in sexual reproduction that includes the male. But as well, as mentioned above, there are etymological connotations in the word "sexual": to cut-off, to divide. This kind of sexual reproduction holds true for the other two males in Paradise Lost who give birth. Both Satan and Adam conceive their offspring through a mental process: Sin springs from Satan's head, and Eve is cut from Adam's rib.

Like Plato in Mary O'Brien's reading of The Symposium, Milton has moved the conception of love away from biological reproduction to a life-force originating in the language of a single male parent. Plato justified this move because he allied female sexuality with Poverty and Poverty sullied "the purity of the masculine moral potency and philosophical prowess" (O'Brien, 127). Milton justifies this move in a similar fashion.

II

In the middle of Book II of Paradise Lost, as Satan explores Hell and discovers its gates, he encounters two horrible shapes who, unbeknownst to him, are his offspring. One of them, his son Death, does not recognize him. As Satan approaches the gate, Death comes forward to challenge him. Both exchange insults, and

then, as "Each at the Head / Levell'd his deadly aim...thir fatal hands / No second stroke intend" (II, 711-13), Satan's first offspring, Sin, rushes in and, through her cries, prevents the internecine contest:

> O Father, what intends thy hand, she cri'd,
> Against thy only Son? What fury O Son,
> Possesses thee to bend that mortal Dart,
> Against thy Father's head? (II, 727-730)

To this point in the poem, Satan has no knowledge of paternity. His son, Death, is unfamiliar with this notion as well: as we learn later in the passage, Death has no qualms about raping his own mother. The Satan-Sin-Death relationship is one of incest and violence until the powerful words, "Father" and "Son," stay the imminent battle and turn the confrontation into a familial discussion of genealogy. Surprised by Sin's utterance, Satan replies:

> So strange thy outcry, and thy words so strange
> Thou interposest, that my sudden hand
> Prevented spares to tell thee yet by deeds
> What it intends: till first I know of thee,
> What thing thou art, thus double-form'd, and why
> In this infernal Vale first met thou call'st
> Me Father, and that Phantasm call'st my Son?
> I know thee not, nor ever saw till now
> Sight more detestable than him and thee. (II, 737-745)

Perhaps Satan could be forgiven that he does not recognize his own family; after all, he has been at war with God and, having lost that war, he is planning revenge on God's creation. Yet, when he learns of his family, he immediately assumes the role of patriarch. Somewhere inside him is a natural desire to be a good Father, to make a comfortable home for his family, to bring home the bacon. Even his form of address to the two horrible shapes

changes remarkably:

> Dear Daughter, since thou claim'st me for thy Sire,
> And my fair Son here show'st me, the dear pledge
> Of dalliance had with thee in Heav'n, and joys
> Then sweet, now sad to mention, through dire change
> Befall'n us foreseen, unthought of, know
> I come no enemy, but to set free
> From out this dark and dismal house of pain,
> Both him and thee....[I] shall soon return,
> And bring ye to the place where Thou and Death
> Shall dwell at ease, and up and down unseen
> Wing silently the buxom Air, imbalm'd
> With odors; there things shall be your prey. (II, 817-844)

Milton hints at the legitimacy of the family institution in the relationship between Death, Sin, and their canine offspring; the Cerberean Hell Hounds are obedient only to their father. The reaction of Sin and Death to Satan's announcement affirms the patriarchal family as a natural institution. Death grins with glee, and Sin, without hesitation, unlocks the gates of Hell, though she has been forbidden to do so by God. Justifying her disobedience, Sin tells Satan:

> Thou art my Father, thou art my Author, thou
> My being gav'st me: whom should I obey
> But thee, whom follow? thou wilt bring me soon
> To that new world of light and bliss, among
> The Gods who live at ease, where I shall Reign
> At thy right hand voluptuous, as beseems
> Thy daughter and thy darling, without end. (II, 864-870).

Sin's use of the words "Father" and "Author" echoes the Words of God. Arlene Anderson Swidler has suggested that Milton, in having Sin express her desire to reign at the right hand of Satan, is consciously parodying the role of Christ as God's right hand. Furthermore, she suggests that the birth of Sin is an inversion of the birth of Christ. She cites Thomas Aquinas, who glosses the creation in this way:

> So in this manner the procession of the Word in God is generation; for He proceeds by way of intelligible action...by way of similitude, inasmuch as the concept of the intellect is a likeness of the object conceived.... Hence the procession of the Word in God is called generation; and the Word Himself proceeding is called the Son.[3]

The Son is not only a product of the Mind of God, but the " `concept of the intellect [Word] is a likeness of the object conceived [God].' This, like Augustine's statement that `The Son is the Image of the Father,' which Aquinas quotes, is strikingly close to the phrase Sin uses in speaking of herself to Satan -- `thy perfect image' (II, 764)" (Swidler, 41).

Unlike the love that exists between God and his Son, which results in the Holy Spirit, the love between Satan and Sin is carnal and their offspring is Death (Swidler, 41). Milton, following a tradition that, as we have seen, extends back to Plato's Symposium, has established two forms of love: divine and carnal. However, because the birth of Sin is a parody, the creative process of Satan, a male, must be similar to that of God. In begetting Sin, Satan attempts to imitate the begetting of the Son.

Satan conceives Sin almost simultaneously with God's proclamation: "This day I have begot whom I declare / My only son, and on this holy Hill / Him have anointed" (V, 603). All heaven receives this news joyously except Satan. Satan becomes "Fraught / With envy against the Son of God" (V, 662) and "Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain" (V, 666). This deep malice, if we follow the poem chronologically from this

portentously numbered line, is the dominant thought of Satan throughout the poem. In Book II, Beelzebub puts forth the plan to enter Eden and destroy God's creation. But, as Milton reminds the reader,

> Thus **Beelzebub**
> Pleaded his devilish Counsel, first devis'd
> By **Satan**, and in part propos'd: for whence,
> But from the Author of all ill could Spring
> So deep a malice, to confound the race
> Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell
> To mingle and involve, done all to spite
> The great Creator? (II, 278-385)

Again in Book IV, Satan, having arrived on earth and seeing the sun, experiences "pale ire, envy and despair" (IV, 115) over his own plight. But he soon has it under control. Writes Milton:

> Whereof he soon aware
> Each perturbation smoothed with outward calm,
> Artificer of fraud, and was the first
> That practiced falsehood under saintly show,
> Deep malice to conceal, couched with revenge.(IV, 119-123)

This thought is so powerful that Satan only twice neglects it. Both times it is lust that overpowers his malicious thought: lust for Sin, when she is born (II,764), and lust for Eve, before he tempts her (IX, 461). "Deep malice," of course, is another name for Sin. Not only does she "Spring" from the "Author of all ill," but she is also "falsehood under saintly show," a fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Parodying the Word of God, she is a "Sign Portentous" (II, 760). Sin is the concept of Satan's intellect made incarnate: double-formed, she is lust disguised as love.

Satan's language is "counterfeited truth" (V, 771). Unlike the Word of God, Satan's system of signs requires

interpretation; his language is never what it seems. It is the novelty of lying in a universe based on truth that gives Satan so much power. Yet it is the only language of which he is capable. And it is through language that Satan seduces man. Eve, who has never experienced deceptive language, is easily seduced by Satan's lie. When Satan encounters Eve alone in Eden, he entices her to sin by drawing her away from God's command in an appeal to her own narcissistic desires:

> [God] knows that in the day
> Ye eat thereof, your Eyes that seem so clear,
> Yet are but dim, shall perfetly be then
> Op'n'd and clear'd, and ye shall be as Gods,
> Knowing both Good and Evil as they know....
> The Gods are first, and that advantage use
> On our belief, that all from them proceeds:
> I question it, for this fair Earth I see,
> Warm'd by the Sun, producing every kind,
> Them nothing: If they all things, who enclos'd
> Knowledge of Good and Evil in this Tree,
> That who so eats thereof, forthwith attains
> Wisdom without their leave? (IX, 705-725)

His arguments convince her that she can have wisdom equal to the god's. But he also has appealed to her own knowledge that she is to be god-like, "Mother of human Race." Desiring this fruit with the ability "Of virtue to make wise" (XI, 778), she eats. What is remarkable is the kind of wisdom Eve receives. She too is now capable of lying:

> But to **Adam** in what sort
> Shall I appear? shall I to him make known
> As yet my change, and give him to partake
> Full happiness with mee, or rather not,
> But keep the odds of Knowledge in my power
> Without Copartner? so to add what wants
> In Female Sex, the more to draw his Love,
> And render me more equal, and perhaps,
> A thing not undesirable, sometime
> Superior: for inferior who is free?

> This may be well: but what if God have seen,
> And Death ensue? then I shall be no more,
> And **Adam** wedded to another **Eve**,
> Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
> A death to think. Confirm'd then I resolve,
> **Adam** shall share with me in bliss or woe. (IX, 816-831)

The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge has given her a new language. Having been tricked once, Eve easily adapts to the method of counterfeit language and 'charms' Adam into eating the fruit as well. Hughes has noted the similarities between this speech by Eve and Satan's in Book V, 792-93, when Satan incites the other angels to join him in his rebellion (Hughes, 225). Having sinned, Eve's language echoes that of Satan. But Adam does not have to be charmed by Eve. He allows her language to corrupt his reason. As we shall see, this is Adam's sin.

The argument made by Satan to Eve is not specifically designed to corrupt Eve. This is the only argument Satan can conceive. Since God proclaimed his "only begotten Son" as his viceregent, Satan has been obsessed with the relationship between creator and creation. Witnessing this figurative generation inspires Satan to imitation. But his imitation is not out of love for God, but out of hate. In Book V, when Abdiel refutes the reasoning of Satan, saying "shalt thou dispute / With him the points of liberty, who made / Thee what thou art" (V, 824-826), Satan counters:

> That we were form'd then say'st thou? and the work
> Of secondary hands, by task transferr'd
> From Father to his son? strange point and new!
> Doctrine which we would know whence learnt: who saw
> When this creation was? remember'st thou
> Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?
> We know no time when we were not as now;

> Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd
> By our own quick'ning power, when fatal course
> Had circl'd his full Orb, the birth mature
> Of this native Heav'n, Ethereal sons.
> Our puissance is our own, our own right hand
> Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try
> Who is our equal. (V, 853-866)

And to prove his point that he too is capable of creating, he physically begets the deep malice previously conceived. Sin later retells[4] this event to Satan:

> In Heav'n, when at th' Assembly, and in sight
> Of all the Seraphim with thee combin'd
> In bold conspiracy against Heav'n's King,
> All on a sudden miserable pain
> Surpris'd thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum
> In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast
> Threw forth, till on the left side op'ning wide,
> Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright,
> Then shining heav'nly fair, A Goddess arm'd
> Out of thy head I sprung: amazement seiz'd
> All th' Host of Heav'n; back they recoil'd afraid
> At first, and call's me **Sin**, and for a Sign
> Portentous held me. (II, 749-761)

Milton's description of the birth of Sin and Death, as Hughes notes, is based on the Epistle of James i, 15: "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Hughes, 51). This is a biblical saying, an act of language, a metaphor. However, because the creation of Death is a physical act and Satan is not aware of his offspring until told by Sin, Milton must establish without a doubt that there is a direct relationship between Satan and Death. Sin, Death's mother, yet motherless herself, confirms Satan as the father:

> I pleas'd, and with attractive graces won
> The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft
> Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing

> Becam'st enamor'd, and such joy thou took'st
> With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd
> A growing burden....
> [In Hell] Pensive here I sat
> Alone, but long I sat not, till my womb
> Pregnant by thee, and now excessive grown
> Prodigious motion felt and rueful throes.
> At last this odious offspring whom thou seest
> Thine own begotten, breaking violent way
> Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain
> Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
> Transform'd: but he my inbred enemy
> Forth issu'd, brandishing his fatal Dart
> Made to destroy: I fled, and cri'd out **Death**. (II, 747-789)

With the birth of Death, the parody is complete. Like God, Satan too has begot a king. Although he has not acted entirely through language, his creation of sin is an imitation of God's figurative generation. Sin is the metaphor used by the "Author of all ill" to inscribe the world with death. However, double-formed Sin is female. She is also the only heaven-born female, but, unlike the other angels, she is not an offspring of God. In fact, the only heaven-born female is impure. Above the waist she is fair, but her womb gives birth to death:

> These yelling Monsters that with ceaseless cry
> Surrounded me, as thou saw'st, hourly conceived
> And hourly born, with sorrow infinite
> To me, for when they list into the womb
> That bred them they return, and howl and gnaw
> My Bowels, thir repast; then bursting forth
> Afresh with conscious terrors vex me round,
> That rest or intermission none I find. (II, 795-802)

Sin is a metaphor for Satan's love and she is depicted as a type of Scylla. Ovid's story of Glaucus and Scylla can also be interpreted as a parable about carnal love. Glaucus, who claims to love Scylla, rejects her when the lower half of her body is sullied by Circe. St. John of Chrysostom is the first to use

Scylla as an image of the sin of covetousness (Hughes, 48). Circe's lust for Glaucus and hate of Scylla results in Scylla's deformation. St. John writes:

> But were he to search out the mind also of that sort of people, he would no longer call them beasts only, but demons. For first, they are full of great cruelty and of hatred against their "fellow-servant" (St. Mat. xviii,33) and neither is love of the kingdom there, nor fear of hell; no reverence for men, no pity, no sympathy: but shamelessness and audacity, and contempt of all things to come. And unto them the words of God concerning punishment seem to be a fable, and His threats mirth. For such is the mind of the covetous man. (St. Chrysostom, 52)

Indeed, such is the mind of Satan.

Satan's hatred of God is only surpassed by his love of self. Sin, the image of Satan's intellect incarnate, gives birth to death. This is in contrast to the Son, who is "the image of the Father." That both God and Satan give birth to their own likeness suggests a degree of narcissism in Milton's notion of male creativity. This is emphasized by the incestuous relationship between creator and creation. Yet these incestuous relationships differ in that God's love-making with the Son is through the Word and gives birth to life, whereas Satan's love-making with Sin is physical and leads to death. Milton, in Paradise Lost, like Plato in the Symposium, establishes two kinds of love (that is, love that specifically involves creation and generation). Choosing between these two kinds of love will be Adam's, and thus all men's, responsibility.

III

When we find Adam lamenting his solitude, in Book VIII, just before the creation of Eve, he is saddened not so much by a lack of mate as by the absence of companionship in general. Adam has been endowed by God with his own language. In his complaint to God, Adam reveals that he too has been endowed with a narcissistic proclivity. He wants a companion just like himself. This is inevitable because he is aware not only that his language is the sole rational language of all things created by God, but as well that he is God's substitute on earth. Adam conceives a companion, and God aids him in her birth. However, the love he feels for his creation is not the same as that love he feels for God. Raphael advises Adam to pursue "heav'nly love" (VIII, 592), though Paradise is lost because of carnal love. The choice between the two kinds of love is man's responsibility. If he governs his "Fancy" with reason, the choice should be obvious. This is not so apparent for Adam. Adam complains to God:

> In solitude
> What happiness, who can enjoy alone,
> Or enjoying, what contentment find? (VIII, 364-66)
>
> Hast thou not made me here thy substitute,
> And these inferior far beneath me set?
> Among equals what society
> Can sort, what harmony or true delight?
> Which must be mutual, in proportion due
> Giv'n and receiv'd; but in disparity
> The one intense, the other still remiss
> Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove
> Tedious alike: Of fellowship I speak
> Such as I seek, fit to participate
> All rational delight, wherein the brute
> Cannot be human consort. (VIII, 381-397)

Adam is aware of his superiority over God's other creations. Yet being aware of this is not enough for him. He wants to communicate this superiority to some other rational being, but not necessarily the mate with whom he is eventually presented. It is a fellowship that he seeks. Adam is aware of the other sex. He can distinguish between lion and lioness and is probably familiar with their form of reproduction. However, Adam's desire for companionship does not include reproductive notions. Rather, he desires a companion in order to praise his creator. He desires to reproduce the divine love that has created him:

> O by what Name, for thou above all these,
> Above mankind, or aught than mankind higher,
> Surpassest far my naming, how may I
> Adore thee, Author of this Universe,
> And all this good to man, for whose well being
> So amply, and with hands so liberal
> Thou hast provided all things: but with mee
> I see not who partakes. (VIII, 358-364)

He declares that by himself he is of no use to God. He needs someone with whom to share his love of God. God's love can continuously reproduce itself; man is imperfect in this way. However, through language, he can attempt to overcome this deficiency. It is through "conversation" that he will reproduce his love of God. Adam argues:

> Thou in thyself art perfet, and in thee
> Is no deficience found; not so is Man,
> But in degree, the cause of his desire
> By conversation with his like to help,
> Or solace his defects....
> But Man by number is to manifest
> His single imperfection, and beget
> Like of his like, His image multipli'd,
> In unity defective, which requires
> Collateral love, and dearest amity.
> Thou in thy secrecy although alone,

> Best with thyself accompanied, seek'st not
> Social communication, yet so pleas'd,
> Canst raise thy Creature to what highth thou wilt
> Of Union or communion, deifi'd;
> I by conversing cannot these erect
> From prone, nor in thir ways complacence find.
> (VIII, 415-433)

To love God continuously, man must be able to multiply his own image. Adam is attracted to the word "beget," and his use of it includes the metaphor of figurative generation. However, unlike God, who in his "simplicity and unity...[has the] capacity for eternal happiness in the contemplation of unchanging truth" and who can therefore beget with the power of his Word, Adam's gift of language is powerless (Hughes, 195). His state of unity is defective, because God's gift of language cannot be put to use. He wants to create more men like himself so that they will worship God together. It is through language, rational "conversation," that he will beget others to praise God. Though he is aware from his observations of the other beasts that there is a hierarchical order between male and female, Adam makes no reference to a desire for a member of the opposite sex. As Edward Le Comte notes, Adam's use of the expression "collateral love" implies the Latin meaning "side by side," and implies both physical love or community worship.

God is satisfied with Adam's plea. He replies, promises, and immediately acts. Adam enters a trance, and God, in a sense, incarnates his "Fancy." Yet God's reply is rather curious. When Milton has God say "I, ere thou spak'st, / Knew it not good for Man to be alone," he implies that Adam conceived Eve by himself.

But Adam has not made any mention of a female companion. What he has professed is a love of God and a desire to communicate this love perpetually. As we will see in the next chapter, Milton claims his muse functions in a similar way:

> I, ere thou spak'st,
> Knew it not good for Man to be alone,
> And no such company as then thou saws't
> Intended thee, for trial only brought,
> To see how thou couldst judge of fit and meet:
> What next I bring shall please thee, be assur'd,
> Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,
> Thy wish, exactly to thy heart's desire. (VIII, 444-451)

God acts, and Adam is put by God into a "Dazzl'd and spent" state. He retains his "Cell / of Fancy, [his] internal sight, by which / Abstract as in a trance [he thinks he sees]...the shape / Still glorious before whom to awake" (VIII, 460-464). Yet God tells Adam that this new companion will be "Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self, / Thy wish, exactly to thy heart's desire." However, Adam appears a little surprised when he learns that his companion will be of "different sex." And his response on seeing Eve does not lead to conversation on the love of God, but a carnal desire, reminiscent of Satan, and a quick dash to the nuptial bower. As Adam relates the birth of Eve to the angel Raphael, he comments on his sudden carnal desire, which he attributes to Eve:

> The Rib he form'd and fashion'd with his hands;
> Under his forming hands a Creature grew,
> Manlike, but different sex, so lovely fair,
> That what seem'd fair in all the World, seem'd now
> Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd
> And in her looks, which from that time infus'd
> Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
> And into all things from her Air inspir'd
> The spirit of love and amorous delight. (VIII, 465-476)

Adam falls instantly in love with Eve. Eve is a product of Adam's "Fancy." Adam has conceived her for the purpose of praising God, and God has aided him in her birth. But in having created another creature, Adam experiences a sense of overwhelming rapture. This ecstacy is the "spirit of love and amorous delight" that he claims is inspired by "her Air." Yet, Eve is Adam's conception of love made incarnate. Having manifested his love of God, God has helped Adam realize this love. Yet Adam reacts to Eve as if she were more intelligent than he. He tells Raphael: "Nature fail'd in mee, and left some part / Not proof enough such Object to sustain, / Or from my side subducting, took perhaps / More than enough" (VIII, 534-37). As we have noted, however, there are two forms of love: heavenly and carnal. Paradise Lost, from this point on, can be interpreted as Adam's struggle to understand the dual nature of love. How Adam governs this love will result in either death or salvation.

The relationship Adam has with Eve deserves further study because it is in Adam's failure to govern Eve as patriarchy would have a husband govern his wife that paradise is lost. Though Eve is a human being, she was conceived in the mind of Adam. This gives her a status similar to the Son and to Sin. Not only are both the Son and Sin products of a male mind, but they are also closely associated with language. The Son, through the Word, creates; Sin, through her false language, brings about death. Milton, however, depicts Eve as pure (narcissistic) love.

Love itself is a metaphysical quality; in itself, it cannot be good or bad. Rather, carnal or heavenly love exists in the mind of the lover. Adam, in order to love God, must learn to govern his "Fancy," and since Eve is his "Fancy" incarnate, he must learn to govern her. Milton professes this when he has Eve acknowledge to Adam her need of his guidance. This occurs in a passage where we find Eve not only confirming that she was born of Adam, but re-affirming this fact through her remembrance of God's first words to her:

> O thou for whom
> And from whom I was form'd flesh of thy flesh,
> And without whom am to no end, my Guide
> And Head, what thou hast said is just and right.
> ...That day I oft remember, when from sleep
> I first awak't, and found myself repos'd
> Under a shade on flow'rs, much wond'ring where
> And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.
> [Upon the surface of a lake]... I had fixt
> Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire,
> Had not a voice thus warn'd me, What thou seest,
> What there thou seest fair Creature is thyself,
> With thee it came and goes; but follow me,
> And I will bring thee where no shadow stays
> Thy coming, and thy soft imbraces, hee
> Whose image thou art, him thou shalt enjoy
> Inseparably thine, to him shalt bear
> Multitudes like thyself, and thence be call'd
> Mother of human Race. (IV, 440-475)

God's `voice' warns her of her narcissism. This voice also brings her to Adam and tells her why she was created. Yet God makes no mention that she is to be a partner in Adam's "conversations." Rather, she is to yield to Adam's "imbraces" and "to him shalt bear multitudes." In return for being Adam's incubator, she will be called "Mother of human Race." Eve reacts passively to this command; in fact, Eve responds only to

commands. It is in her nature to be governed. Satan does not have any problem persuading Eve to eat the fatal fruit that she believes will make her equal to the Gods. Left by herself, she prefers self-indulgence. But then, of course, she has been "authored" by Adam and in him all wisdom lies. This she herself confirms for Adam:

> I espi'd thee, fair indeed and tall,
> Under a Platan, yet methought less fair,
> Less winning soft, less amiably mild,
> Than that smooth wat'ry image; back I turn'd,
> Thou following cri'd'st aloud, Return fair **Eve**.
> ...I yielded, and from that time see
> How beauty is excell'd by manly grace
> And wisdom, which alone is truly fair. (IV, 475-491)
>
> My Author and Disposer, what thou bidd'st
> Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains,
> God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more
> Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise. (IV, 634-638)

Having established that Eve is little more then an incubator that will produce men capable of rational conversation, Milton depicts Adam's struggle to understand this purpose of his creation. She was created to help him praise God. Yet, Adam worships her in the way he said he would worship God. Only after the Fall does Adam realize that he was wrong in his excessive love for Eve. Carnal love leads to death; heavenly love is expressed through the Word. He comes to this conclusion by playing on the word "Fruit." The Latin root of fruit is **frux**, which is derived from **fructus**. **Fructus** contains the meanings: enjoyment, delight, satisfaction. However, from the word **frux**, there is derived an adjective **frugalis**, which means thrifty, temperate, frugal, provident, worthy (Partridge; Lewis). Adam's

carnal love for Eve allows her to indulge in her own narcissism. It is his role to govern Eve, but he surrenders this in his constant amorous attention. Left to her own, Eve eats the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Eve, however, has herself asserted that she has no need of knowledge (IV, 637-38). Her role is not to eat the fruit of knowledge, but to bear the fruit of her womb. From her womb will come not only the source of "conversation," but as Milton announces in the opening lines of Paradise Lost, "one greater Man" (I, 4). Sexual love is still necessary in order to produce more men, but sexual love must include frugality.

The movement to the "Fruit of the womb" from the "Fruit of knowledge" is significant for two reasons. First, the two different "Fruits" are a reminder of the private and public spheres. Eve belongs only to the first. As a representative of all woman, she has a sole function: she is to bear children. She was not brought into the world as companion for "conversation," but as tool for reproducing more men. As a bearer of children, she is subject to her husband. Second, because Eve's "Fruits" are destined to die, biological reproduction as a continuum of the Word of God is flawed: all of her offspring are tainted by original sin. However, Adam assumes responsibility for the eating of the "Fruit." He belongs to the second sphere, in which rational "conversation" will glorify the love of God. It is through the Word of God that death is overcome. Because the public sphere is the realm of men, male temporal consciousness

becomes continuous. Male potency is justified because of the Fall. That male potency is inate is already obvious in Adam's first encounter with Eve.

On first seeing Eve, Adam thanks God for this gift and then, in imitation of God, commands Eve with his word and subjugates her by naming her in his own name.

> I now see
> Bone of my Bone, Flesh of my Flesh, my Self
> Before me; woman is her Name, of Man
> Extracted; for this cause he shall forgo
> Father and Mother, and to his Wife adhere;
> And they shall be one Flesh, one Heart, one Soul.
> (VIII, 494-99)

However, Adam's authoritative voice stops when he encounters a strange new emotion. The love Adam feels for her should be the equivalent of "heav'nly love." Yet this is not so. Like Satan, Adam, upon seeing Eve, is filled with carnal desire and lust. Their journey to the "Nuptial bow'r" may seem like an expression of "Collateral love," but Milton details his bower with sensual descriptions.[5] The Evening Star, which illuminates the bower, is the star of Venus, Goddess of Love. Love in the "Nuptial bow'r" is not of the heavenly kind:

> To the Nuptial Bow'r
> I led her blushing like the Morn: all Heav'n,
> And happy constellations on that hour
> Shed thir selectest influence; the Earth
> Gave sign of gratulation, and each Hill;
> Joyous the Birds; fresh Gales and gentle Airs
> Whisper'd it to the Woods, and from thir wings
> Flung Rose, flung Odors from the spicy Shrub,
> Disporting, till the amorous Bird of Night
> Sung Spousal, and bid haste the Ev'ning Star
> On his hill top, to light the bridal lamp. (VIII, 510-520)

As Adam narrates the story of Eve's creation to the angel

Raphael, he admits that there is something wrong in his own relationship with Eve. He knows that the love he feels for Eve is not the love that was intended when she was created. Like many male writers before and after him, Milton has Adam express to Raphael that Eve may even be more intelligent than he. Adam would like to blame his confusion on Nature. He has asked God for companionship and God has helped him bear his wish. Yet Eve

> Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;
> All higher knowledge in her presence falls
> Degraded, Wisdom in discourse with her
> Loses discount'nanc't, and like folly shows. (VIII,550-54)

She is not supposed to be equal to him, and this troubles him more for he knows his wisdom is subjugated by her wishes. Raphael, however, responds with the words "Accuse not Nature, she hath done her part" (VIII, 561). These words will be repeated later by God when he discovers that both of them have eaten from the Tree of Knowledge (X, 145-56). The fault is not Eve's but Adam's. Adam has to regiment Eve properly, and he can only do so if he sees her for what she is: a help, a tool, a metaphor that will distinguish Adam from other beasts. God says:

> Adorn'd
> She was indeed, and lovely to attract
> Thy Love, not thy Subjection, and her Gifts
> Were such under Government well seem'd,
> Unseemly to bear rule, which was thy part
> And person, hadst thou known thyself aright. (X, 151-156)

Carnal love is no different, then, from love between beasts. Adam conceived Eve to profess his love of God. It is those characteristics in Eve which distinguish her from the other beasts that Raphael instructs Adam to love. This is the purpose

of Eve:

> But if sense of touch whereby mankind
> Is propagated seem such dear delight
> Beyond all other, think the same voutsaf't
> To Cattle and each Beast; which would not be
> To them made common and divulg'd, if aught
> Therein enjoy'd were worthy to subdue
> The Soul of Man, or passion in him move.
> What higher in her society thou find'st
> Attractive, human, rational, love still;
> In loving thou dost well, in passion not,
> Wherein true Love consists not; Love refines
> The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat
> In Reason, and is judicious, is the scale
> By which to heav'nly Love thou may'st ascend,
> Not sunk in carnal pleasure, for which cause
> Among the Beasts no Mate for thee was found. (VIII, 379-594)

Adam's ignorance of what to do with Eve leads to their expulsion from Paradise. In his post-lapsarian state, however, Adam is more sensible. It is only here that he begins to understand "Heav'nly love." Having sinned, he has become extremely aware of the importance of biology. Carnal love is the cause of his sin. Because he has sinned he will never enter heaven. His idea of "Collateral love" has been poisoned, and because of biology, he will be cursed by all his seed:

> All that I eat or drink, or shall beget,
> Is propagated curse. O voice once heard
> Delightfully, **Increase and multiply,**
> Now death to hear! for what can I increase
> Or multiply, but curses on my head?
> Who of all Ages to succeed, but feeling
> The evil on him brought by me, will curse
> My Head; Ill fare our Ancestors impure,
> For this we may thank **Adam**. (X, 728-736)

He invokes death, yet fears that it may not be instant, but "endless misery" (X, 810). Finally, he concludes that, like death, "the Spirit of Man" is eternal. That **damned** biology is

just as powerful as death:

> Both death and I
> Am found Eternal, and incorporate both,
> Nor I on my part single, in mee all
> Posterity stands curst: Fair Patrimony
> That I must leave ye, Sons.
> ...But from me what can proceed,
> But all corrupt, both Mind and Will deprav'd,
> Not to do only, but to will the same
> With me?
> ...All my evasions vain
> And reasonings, though through Mazes, lead me still
> But to my own conviction: first and last
> On mee, mee only, as source and spring
> Of all corruption, all the blame lights due. (X, 815-34)

It is at this point in Paradise Lost that Milton, like Plato before him, moves the conception of love "as life-force totally divorced from biological reproduction to a conception of single male parenthood, in which conception has nothing to do with women because female sexuality presumably sullies the purity of the masculine moral potency and physical prowess" (O'Brien, 127). To overcome the problem of biological reproduction, Milton has Eve propose to Adam that they abstain from physical love or, even better, commit suicide; in essence, she proposes to kill biological reproduction. Eve says:

> If care of our descent perplex us most
> ...and of our Loins to bring
> Into this cursed World a woeful Race,
> That after wretched Life must be at last
> Food for so foul a Monster, in thy power
> It lies, yet ere Conception to prevent
> The Race unblest, to being yet unbegot.
> Childless thou art, Childless remain: So Death
> Shall be deceiv'd his glut, and with us two
> Be forc'd to satisfy his Rav'nous Maw.
> But if thou judge it hard and difficult,
> Conversing, looking, loving, to abstain
> From Love's due Rites, Nuptial embraces sweet,
> And with desire to languishing without hope...
> Then both ourselves and Seed at once to free

From what we fear for both, let us make short,
Let us seek Death, or he not found, supply
With our own hands his Office on ourselves. (X, 979-1001)

In this passage, the first serious dialogue between Adam and Eve after the Fall, Adam discovers how he will overcome his problems surrounding biology and sexual love and, in turn, he solves the riddle of Eve. Adam's reply to her proposal is: "Eve, thy contempt of life and pleasure seems / To argue in thee something more sublime / And excellent than what thy mind contemns" (X, 1013-15). Abstention and suicide will greatly harm death, but the chief enemy of man, Satan, will go unpunished. It is through the fruit of Eve's womb, however, that the sin of eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge will be revenged. Through Eve, death has been brought into this world. But now, in her new role as Mother of the human race, her womb will bring forth new life. As a source of new men, she will also be a source of "conversations," a source of revenge. Discovering this purpose for Eve, Adam makes God an offering of "heav'nly love." His prayer is answered:

For since I sought
By Prayer th 'offended Deity to appease,
Kneel'd and before him humbl'd all my heart,
Methought I saw him placable and mild,
Bending his ear; persuasion in me grew
That I was heard with favor; peace return'd
Home to my Breast, and to my memory
His promise, that thy Seed shall bruise or Foe;
Which then not minded in dismay, yet now
Assures me that the bitterness of death
Is past, and we shall live. Whence Hail to thee
Eve rightly call'd, Mother of all Mankind,
Mother of all things living, since by thee
Man is to live, and all things live for Man. (XI, 148-161)

Milton, in justifying the ways of God to men, is also

justifying the role of women in society. He uses the figure of Eve to affirm this. But he also justifies the public realm as an exclusively male realm. As a poet and propagandist, he is aware of the power of language, but he is also aware of the power of biological reproduction. In order to privilege the Word over biology, he must demonstrate that biology can sully the Word. He does this by associating biological reproduction with Satan, death, and original sin. Without the power of the Word, man is no better than the beasts. Adam, with the help of divine love, conceives of Eve as a tool to elevate man over beast. Eve serves to mediate between man and beast. She is similar to the beasts because she can reproduce offspring. Yet, unlike the offspring of beasts, Eve's children are capable of learning the Word. This capability gives man the potential to overcome original sin and to learn heavenly love.

Milton, like Plato before him, plays on the word "conceive." But, also like Plato, he is concerned with the problem of male alienation in the reproductive process. Not having any sons of his own, Milton devoted much of his life to educating the sons of others. By privileging the creative power of language over the power of biological reproduction, he maintains that he has a temporal consciousness that is continuous far beyond the first female. In fact, his power of language allows him to claim government over all he can conceive. And as Adam conceived Eve, so man has natural power over woman. The creation of Eve is the creation of a metaphor that allows men to give birth.

Endnotes - Chapter Two

1. See Maurice Kelley, p.82-106; H.J.C. Grierson,p.458-60; Denis Saurat, p, 225-28. Cited by Kelley, p.96.

2. Merritt Y. Hughes cites this note for VII, 163:

Milton's insistence in The Christian Doctrine I, v that the Son was voluntarily begotten by the Father, that creation was accomplished through him by the Father, and that the Son "in his capacity as creator is himself called `the first-born of every creature'" (Col. i, 15-17).

3. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae (Dominican trans.), I, 27, 2; cited by Swidler.

4. A point of interest: Satan can't remember giving birth to Sin, nor can he remember what happened before or after her birth. Sin on the other hand is aware of all that happened not only after her birth, but just before it as well.Is it possible that Satan expelled all his thoughts at that moment including his short term memory. Is there any relationship between short term memory loss and the birthing act?

Satan also argues that he is self-begot, self-raised because he can't remember his own birth. However, Sin, Adam and Eve all are capable of remembering their births.

5. This garden is reminiscent of the garden in The Romance of the Rose. The association between literary gardens and the Garden of Eden see D.W. Robertson, Jr. "The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens," Speculum, 26 (1951), 24-49.

CHAPTER THREE

Milton's Private Muse

Merritt Y. Hughes has noted that Milton, in writing an epic poem based on the theme of creation, is not alone in his choice of subject. "[In] creation, Milton had the great epic theme of the century. [It is] the theme of the Divine Weeks of the French Calvinist poet Guillame Salluste Sieur du Bartas, which was more popular in the English translation of Joshua Sylvester that Milton knew as a child than the original ever was in France. Creation was the theme of Torquato Tasso's The Creation of the World (Il mondo creato) and -- to some extent -- pagan poems like Hesiod's Theogeny, Ovid's Metamorphoses, [Plato's Timeaus,] and Lucretius' On the Nature of Things (De rerum natura)" (Hughes, xvi). However Milton's retelling of the story of Genesis vastly differs from previous creation poems and certainly includes "Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme." His choice of subject reflects his own concern over the political situation then in England. In the theme of creation, Milton found a conceit in which he could justify the ways of God to men. And, in turn, justify the ways of the poet in society.

As Milton wrote Paradise Lost, England was emerging from a civil war. Milton's use of the theme of creation allowed him to

retell history in such a way that the English would understand their present predicament. Because the laws of God are just and the turmoil from which England was just emerging was, as Milton believed, a result of disobedience to God, England had to be reminded of the ways of God. But Milton is quite removed from the origin of divine law; he is separated not only by time, but, more importantly, by language. As a former propagandist, he knows that there exists a history of distortions and deliberate misinterpretations of the holy scripture. The English Civil War, for the most part, was a war fought on paper. To justify the ways of God to men -- and for Milton the men are English -- he must also justify his capablility to speak of God's ways to man. If he cannot do this, then his English readers will see him as the propogandist that he was during the civil war. The "higher Argument" of his poem needs a special language, one that is divinely inspired. In a sense, he requires a language that will justify the history that he rewrites.

If he is to rewrite history, he must not only master the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and English biblical texts, but his choice of epic poetry means that he must also know the literature of the ancients. The story of the founding of Rome, the story of the Trojan War are both great and important themes, but they are concerned with man after the Fall. Milton chooses to begin his poem before the Fall and, in his theme of man's disobedience, he surpasses the epic themes of Homer, Virgil, and the other ancients even as he acknowledges them.

Like the ancients before him, Milton invokes a muse that will inspire his poem. But the muse must be greater than that of the ancients. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, because man is made in the image of God, man's own creative process comes to be thought of as similar to that of God (or perhaps God's creative process is similar to that of man for it can be said that God is created in the image of man). This does not mean that man is endowed with the same creative powers as God, and certainly Milton did not believe this. As we saw in the previous chapter, Satan's proud attempt to emulate God's creative process is presented as a parody and results in the creation not of life, but of death. Rather, as William Kerrigan has noted, Milton professed that man must acknowledge that his creative ability is a gift from God.[1] "For Milton the full truth about our existence lies in two crucial addenda to the [Cartesian] **cogito**: I think, therefore I am; I am, therefore I was created; I was created, therefore I am religious" (Kerrigan, 154). In Paradise Lost, Adam acknowledges not only that he himself was created by God, but that God aided him in his realization of Eve. Unlike many of his modern readers, the author of Paradise Lost accepts the story of Genesis as absolute truth. The muse that he must invoke, unlike that of his literary predecessors, must aid him in the retelling of the creation of the world. She cannot be just any ordinary (pagan) muse for Milton's story begins before the birth of these muses. Rather, he invokes the "Heav'nly" spirit that was present at creation. She is "offspring of Heav'n

first-born" (III,1).

As we shall see, Milton styles his own creative process on Adam's. Like Adam, he conceives his creation, the poem, by himself. Conception, in both men, occurs in a similar fashion. Adam alone gathers all his thoughts together. These thoughts include his love for God, his own rational language, and a desire to communicate this love for God through his rational language. He then tells God of his desire. Like Milton's muse, God "deigns...unimplored" and presents Adam with Eve. Milton, one of the fruits of Eve's womb, conceives of a poem that will surpass all other poems. He invokes a muse who infuses his memory with "insight," which allows him to see "things invisible to mortal sight." In both men, divine inspiration aids their creative process. However, there is a difference between their creations. Eve is a sexual product (sexual, as well, in the etymological sense of a dividing or a cutting off), whereas Paradise Lost is a textual product. To create life, God, in a masculine form, aids Adam. To create a text, Milton invokes the very same God, yet in the form of a feminine muse. Why the difference in sex? To write poetry on the theme of creation -- a spiritual undertaking -- Milton understands that the writer must invoke the aid of God. However, Milton is writing an English text in the epic tradition. To communicate this spiritual undertaking in the text, to justify himself to his readers, Milton devises a metaphor that will demonstrate to his readers that his poem is more than craftmanship and scholarly learning

and is in fact inspired by the Word of God. This is the function of the muse. But at the same time, his invocation of a feminine muse allows him to control his muse, subtly, without offending God. Milton can invoke the "Omnific Word," as we shall see, by feminizing it, while escaping the punishment inflicted on the ancient poets who sought to do the very same. Male potency gives Milton access to God.

Much has been written about Milton's muse, and especially of its association with light. In his introduction to his edition of Paradise Lost, Hughes cites various interpretations of the relationship between Milton, his muse, and light.[2] Hughes speculates that the relationship between Milton and his muse contains as many literary overtones as we choose to find. Yet critics have failed to note that it is also Milton's **feminine** muse that is associated with light. In some respects, this may seem trivial for the standard muse throughout western literature has been feminine. However, Milton's portrayal of the only two other females in Paradise Lost -- Sin and Eve -- has not been favourable. In fact, females appear to be the cause of all that is wrong in the world. This becomes even more puzzling when we consider that the sex of the spirit associated with light elsewhere in Paradise Lost is always masculine. Milton, writes Hughes, by describing his own invocations of his muse, is also expounding "a complete, deliberate, and substantial theory of poetry," in particular, Renaissance poetic theory. Great epic poetry "can only be written by men who deserve and enjoy divine

illumination," writes Hughes. Yet, by stressing that great poetry can only be written by men -- and I have no doubt that Milton would have agreed with Hughes -- it must be questioned why Milton presents the "Heav'nly" spirit as feminine if the "Omnific Word" is masculine?

William Kerrigan, in his study on the development of the pyschogenesis of Paradise Lost, includes a chapter in which he explores the possible identity of this light. As Kerrigan notes in his preface to The Sacred Complex, his study came about through his interest in Milton's conception of his "own blind body" and how this conception may have affected his creative process. Kerrigan combines what he believes is Milton's understanding of Renaissance medical theory with a modern psychoanalytic reading of Paradise Lost. However, though I would agree with Paul De Man that "the knot is cut" and that even if Milton could somehow be questioned personally about his blindness, our understanding of Milton would still be "disfigured," Kerrigan does provide a useful discussion on the question of light and inspiration.[3]

"There is not a detail of Paradise Lost," Kerrigan writes,

> not a river, a god, a simile, a word -- that is not somehow the progeny of this light. Christ is the first: 'on thee / Imprest th' effulgence of his Glory abides' (III, 387-88). At its first termination, when effluence becomes effulgence and the beam becomes impression, the light is the 'Divine Similitude' impressed on the Son. Released by the Son, this light will be angels ('Progeny of Light at V, 600, 'Sons of Light' at V, 160) and thrown like a mantle over the waters, the cosmos we both are and inhibit. (Kerrigan, 154)

However, Kerrigan dismisses any association between the light

invoked by Milton and the Spirit of the Holy Trinity, arguing that, in the Christian Doctrine, Milton denies the existence of the separate but divine Spirit that, if such a spirit does exist, "cannot be a God nor an object of invocation" (Kerrigan, 150).[4] Rather, Kerrigan writes, Milton portrays the Spirit

> as the motion, separable only by artificial analysis, joining the fountain to the river or the source of light to the object illuminated; Spirit is the flow or energy betwixt source and end, potency and realization.... **Betweenness** permeates the conception of the Spirit....[The] Miltonic Son is the created God who manifests the power and the virtue of the Father from whose substance has been made. For Milton, the space between Father and Son occupied by the orthodox Spirit is first of creation, then of communication. (Kerrigan, 150-52)

Kerrigan's privileging of creation over communication appears to contradict the Gospel of St. John, which reverses this hierarchy:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (St. John i, 1-5)

The author's use of "In the beginning" is most likely the chronological beginning that Milton assumes in Book V. Here, as requested by Adam, Raphael consents to tell "The full relation" (V, 556), and he begins with the very first recorded words of God in Paradise Lost. God says: "This day I have begot whom I declare / My only Son" (V, 604). From this statement, it would appear that the declaration of God is the "Word" to which the author of the Gospel refers. However, "begot" is in the past

tense, suggesting that God first created the Son and then after announced him. Nevertheless, we cannot think of the Son as being human "in the beginning." Man has not yet been created. The Son himself chooses to mediate on behalf of man and this only long after the Fall. His incarnation does not occur "in the beginning." Rather, as God declares, the Son he has begotten is the Law: "him who disobeys / Mee disobeys" (V, 611). God cannot create the Law if he does not first conceive it. The problem is aporiactic.

Let us then consider light as a medium of power, not as an entity. In Paradise Lost, it is a medium of male power. Kerrigan's notion of "betweenness" is better described as the medium of male communication. This "betweenness," in a sense, is another way of expressing Socrates's notion of a "stretched-out male intellect." This is why the muse Milton invokes appears as light. God creates through the power of his Word; God communicates through his power of creation. Throughout Paradise Lost, light mediates both creation and communication: the Son continually reflects the Light of God; God appears to Adam as light; the angels descend on light beams; Adam sees Eve as she is created; the absence of light in Chaos accounts for both its creative and communicative disorder; the light gives Milton "insight." Only in the last example is light feminine. Like language, light gives us the ability to impose meaning. We must recognize that the inscriptions before us in fact make up a word before we can give the word a meaning.[5] In the same way, light

allows us to see an object even before we understand what we see. But language cannot exist without meaning, just as light cannot illuminate without the presence of the object that is illuminated. However, Milton claims that the light that "irradiates" his mind and his memories not only creates words and thoughts, but imposes meaning upon them when, in fact, the imposition of meaning belongs to the faculty of the reader (or seer). To overcome this problem, Milton is very specific in his invocation of the "Heav'nly Spirit." The light that "illuminates" his mind can only be that of the "Omnific Word," of the Spirit that "from the first / Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread / Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss / And mad'st it pregnant" (I, 19-22). His muse has the power of both creation and communication.

Milton's blindness, mixed with his fascination with light, as Kerrigan has noted, gives us perhaps the best insight into his own understanding of inspiration. Blind he says, he is "cut off" not only from the world of sight, but from all written knowledge. He must sit in front of a book that he probably knows by heart and listen to his assistant read. He cannot read the words in front of him, but as he listens, he can see them in his mind:

> Thus with the Year
> Seasons return, but not 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 blanc
Of Nature's works to me expung'd and ras'd,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
So much the rather thou Celestial Light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight. (III, 40-55)

It is all the more peculiar then that the muse that he invokes, "offspring of Heav'n first-born," is also feminine. For, as we have noted, the light that creates and communicates and is associated with God is always masculine. Yet, inside his mind, the muse that visits and gives him insight into his memories, illuminates his mind, "plants eyes" so he "may see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight," is feminine light. He conceives, he gathers together, the "Embryonic atomes" that war with each other; she orders them into life and thus into language. The creative process is instantaneous; and, in its instantaneity, it is identical to the divine creation of life:

The Earth was form'd, but in the Womb as yet
Of Waters, Embryon immature involv'd,
Appear'd not, over all the face of Earth
Main Ocean flow'd, not idle, but with warm
Prolific humor soft'ning all her Globe,
Fermented the great Mother to conceive,
Satiate with genial moisture, when God said...
Let th' Earth bring forth Soul living in her kind,
Cattle and Creeping things, and the Beast of the earth,
Each in their kind. The Earth obey'd, and straight
Op'ning her fertile Womb teem'd at a Birth
Innumerous living Creatures, perfet forms,
Lim'd and full grown. (VII, 276-282, 451-456)

The dark womb-like mind of Milton, like the Mother Earth, is infused with the spirit of light and gives birth to his poem, which "Lim'd and full grown," is issued forth "unpremeditated." Yet the "Omnific Word" that infuses the earth is masculine. Why,

then, does Milton feminize his muse?

Divine love is associated with light. Milton recognizes that, as a son of Adam, he cannot create in the same manner as God. But he does recognize similarities between his desire for poetic creation and God's divine creation: they are both mediated through the Word. As previously noted, God declares:

> And thou my Word, begotten Son, by thee
> This I perform, speak thou, and be it done. (VII, 163-164)

God, through his Word, "begets" his Son. He creates his Son as he imposes meaning upon him: "and on his Son with Rays direct / Shone full; hee all his Father full exprest / Ineffably into his face receiv'd" (VI, 719-21). Like Adam, "our great Progenitor" (V,544), Milton understands the importance of communicating the love of God. Yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, Adam confused the two different kinds of love. Milton, however, realizes that it is "heav'nly love" that will allow him to experience the "betweenness" that is reflected in the face of the Son and later in the face of Moses as he descended the mountain. Inscribed in stone by God, the laws of Moses exemplify the stability of God's Word. This is the kind of inspiration that Milton desires:

> Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
> Of **Oreb**, or of **Sinai**, didst inspire
> That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
> In the Beginning how Heav'ns and Earth
> Rose out of **Chaos**. (I, 6-1Ø)

The muse he chooses to invoke is greater than the pagan muses of Parnassus. She dwells in Sion. As Hughes notes, Milton believed that "Sion is `the mount of love and teaching, as it is

written in Isaye ii, Out of Syon shall come lawe: mounte of propheyse and revelation'" (Hughes, 61). His muse is older and thus greater than that of the ancients. The importance is crucial because he not only wishes to associate himself with the ancients poets, who were given access to the knowledge of God's ways, but, by evoking this "Heav'nly Spirit," he emphasizes that he has been blessed with the power of language that will join him to all that preceeds him and then elevate him beyond:

> Yet not the more
> Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt
> Clear Spring, or shady Grove, or Sunny Hill,
> Smit with the love of sacred Song; but chief
> Thee **Sion** and the flow'ry Brooks beneath
> That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,
> Nightly I visit. Nor sometimes forget
> Those other two equall'd with me in Fate,
> So were I equall'd with them in renown,
> Blind **Thamyris** and blind **Maeonides**,
> And **Tiresias** and **Phineus** Prophets old. (III, 26-36)

This passage does not specify the sex of the muse. However, Noam Flinker has noted that of the four blind pagan poets that Milton remembers, three are "associated with the complex interrelation between inspiration and light on the one hand and sexuality on the other" (Flinker, 91). Thamyris desired to sleep with the muses; Tiresias witnessed the sexual antics of Juno; Phineus was tormented by the Furies for revealing heaven's secrets. Only the fourth, Maeonides (Homer), continued to write after becoming blind. Milton "is very concerned about the audacity of his request for inspiration and realizes that his ancient predecessors courted a great deal of danger on their various quests for poetic and prophetic acheivement" (Flinker,

91). Yet, it must be noted that even though he claims to be possessed by the Muse, in naming her, he asserts his authority over her. He names her Urania, but then almost immediately continues "The meaning, not the name I call" (VII, 5). But what is the meaning? Milton informs us that his muse is sister to "Eternal Wisdom" and that together they played "In the presence of th' Almighty Father." He is in fact invoking the power of God. He cannot presume to know this. Naming the power of God assumes knowledge of that power and this is not only impossible, but it is blasphemous and punishable by God himself.[6] However, by turning the relationship between poet and heavenly muse into a relationship **between** male creator and female communicator, author and trope, Milton can assert that together they will **reproduce** the story of creation and **justify** the ways of God to men. Milton says:

> The meaning, not the Name I call: for thou
> Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
> Of old Olympus dwell'st, but Heav'nly born,
> Before the Hills appear'd, or fountain flow'd,
> Thou with Eternal Wisdom didst converse,
> Wisdom thy Sister, and with her didst play
> In presence of th' Almighty Father, pleas'd
> With thy Celestial Song. Up led by thee
> Into the Heav'n of Heav'ns I have presum'd,
> An earthly Guest, and drawn Empyreal Air,
> Thy temp'ring; with like safety guided down
> Return me to my Native Element. (VII, 5-12)

Having subtly established a male creator/female communicator relationship, Milton forces us to ask who is in charge. Is Milton inspired by his muse, as he claims, or does he use her as a trope to justify his rewriting of history? Milton would like us to believe the former. He goes to great lengths to

differentiate between his feminine muse and the feminine muses of the ancients. This "Heav'nly muse" is more than memory or dream. Milton reminds us of this in a reference to Orpheus. Orpheus was renowned through the Greek world as the greatest of poets. His ability charmed not only the trees and the rocks, but the dead as well. Orpheus's mother was one of the muses, and he inherited his gift from her. However, neither Orpheus nor his songs were immortal. He and his music were destroyed by the clamor of Bacchus and his revellers, who eventually stoned him with the very rocks that he had pleased with his music. His mother could not save him because, in reality, she was only a myth, an "empty dream." Milton writes:

> But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
> Of **Bacchus** and his revellers, the Race
> Of that wild Rout that tore the **Thracian** Bard
> In **Rhodope**, where Woods and Rocks had Ears
> To rapture, till the savage clamor drown'd
> Both Harp and Voice; nor could the Muse defend
> Her Son. So failed not thou, who thee implores:
> For thou art Heav'nly, shee an empty dream. (VII, 32-39).

Milton differentiates between the empty dream muse of Orpheus and his own muse. Unlike the songs inspired by the pagan muses, the words Milton's heavenly muse inspires cannot be corrupted or destroyed. This assertion is rather fantastic: Milton appears to believe that his muse, like the power of the Word at the creation of the world, will have the power to make the words of his poem actually become present. Milton, who is so familiar with the instability of language and its subjugation to interpretation (his ability to write propaganda has already been noted), invokes the very same Spirit that helped the Son to

create the world. Unlike other texts before him, his poem will consist not only of words, but of a singular, divine truth; when Milton "states the presence of Being, his word is Being present."[7] The textual inscription "Let there be Light" will not result only in textually inscribed light, but light, in all its essence, will **be present** in the very word. The voice of God will speak through him:

> And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
> Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
> Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
> Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
> Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
> And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
> Illumine, what is low raise and support;
> That to the highth of this great Argument
> I may assert Eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men. (I, 17-26)

This passage appears on the first page of Paradise Lost. From this passage it would seem that the (here, sexless) muse he invokes is the Word of God; it enters Milton's mind, is metaphorized into a text, and exits from his mouth as a great poem. Milton can assert that "Eternal Providence" has used him as a vehicle to rewrite history. However, in further descriptions of how precisely his creative process functions, the muse takes on a female name and surrenders her authority to Milton. This shift is already apparent in the above passage if we interpret the verbs "Illumine" and "Instruct" as commands and not as requests.

In Book IX of Paradise Lost, Milton returns to his muse. However, he does not invoke her. Instead, he provides a

description of how his muse aids him in the creative process. I stress the word "aids" because, in the following passage, she becomes more of a tool that will raise his poem to "higher Argument" than the source of the argument. This passage includes a detailed description of the theme he is not "by Nature" sedulous enough "to indite." This is the theme of "Wars," the theme of the ancient poets, "hitherto the only Argument / Heroic deem'd" (IX, 25-26). This is not a humble admission of weakness. Rather, Milton wishes to surpass the theme of the ancients. He surrounds this passage with two descriptions of how he interacts with his heavenly muse. Conception of the poem involved a period of contemplative thought: the subject matter was "long in choosing." Like Adam, he conceives the poem in his own "Fancy" and then relies on divine help to give his conception life. The "Celestial Patroness," if he can "obtain" her "answerable style," will raise the poem to "higher Argument" by surrounding "The skill of Artifice," which even a person of "Office mean" could learn, and by infusing the words with essence. The words then proceed out of the mouth of Milton. Any flaws in the poem will be words of his own invention and not the Word of the muse. Milton can claim that his verse is "unpremeditated" because he does not order the words of his poem alone. His mind, which contains all the necessary materials, is infused by the Spirit of God, who acts to assemble his words:

> If answerable style I can obtain
> Of my Celestial Patroness, who deigns
> Her nightly visitation unimplor'd,
> And dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires

> Easy my unpremedited Verse.
> Since first this Subject for Heroic Song
> Pleas'd me long choosing, and beginning late....
> The skill of Artificer or Office mean,
> Not that which justly gives Heroic name
> To person or to Poem. Mee of these
> Nor skill'd nor studious, higher Argument
> Remains, sufficient of itself to raise
> That name, unless an age too late, or cold
> Climate, or Years damp my intended wing
> Deprest; and much they may, if all be mine,
> Not Hers who brings it nightly to my Ear. (IX, 20-26, 39-47)

What is most remarkable about this passage is that his muse visits "unimplor'd, / And dictates to [him] slumb'ring." This is not because she so desires, but because he has ordered her to do so. He needs his muse to justify his words. Fully in charge of his heavenly muse, he directs her to "Sing" (I,6).

In the two previous chapters, we have already discussed the etymology of the word "sexual." To create, to divide, or to separate the thoughts of one's mind is etymologically tied to the notion of sexuality. Milton hints at this notion in the image of the nightingale. It is a bird associated with the night, with singing, and with physical love. When Adam first leads Eve to the "Nuptial bow'r," their evening is accompanied by the song of the Nightingale:

> These lull'd by Nightingales imbracing slept,
> And on thir naked limbs the flow'ry roof
> Show'rd Roses, which the Morn repair'd. (IV, 771-73)

> Joyous the Birds; fresh Gales and gentle Airs
> Whisper'd it to the Woods, and from thir wings
> Flung Rose, flung Odors from the spicy Shrub,
> Disporting, till the amorous Bird of Night
> Sung Spousal, and bid haste the Ev'ning Star
> On his Hill top, to light the bridal Lamp. (VIII, 515-20)

Milton also associates his muse with the music of the

nightingale. He invokes his muse to sing and he calls his poem a song. Yet, for Milton, calling his poem a song means more than the standard poetic name. Blind, Milton dictates his poetry. He converts the illuminate thoughts into words for his amanuensis to inscribe. His voice mediates his thoughts and therefore it is that which divides:

> Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move
> Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful Bird
> Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid
> Tunes her nocturnal Note. (III, 37-40)

Justifying the ways of God, in a sense, is a sexual act; yet it is a temperate one.

Milton feminizes his muse also because he must communicate his thoughts to other men. Communication can occur only through rational conversation. God, who created the Word, is not subject to language. God created all and communicates with all. Everything has been created by God, including his Word, and understands him. His creatures, however, are subject to language. This is true even of Satan. Satan's belief that he can create much like God results in a parody of God's creation. Sin, a sign, Satan's creation, is a parody of the Son. But like all parodies, she would not exist if it were not for the very source she exists to deny (Kerrigan, 154). Satan's invention of the lie is not a new language, but a perversion of God's Word. Adam, on the other hand, is glad of his gift of language. In fact, he is troubled by the fact that he cannot communicate it with anyone; this is his "single imperfection" (VIII, 423). Alone, his gift of rational conversation is wasted. Thus, he conceives of a

companion who will be a help to him in the reproduction of conversation. But as we have seen, Adam has many problems with the female sex he is given as a companion. Though he claims to be puzzled by her inferior intelligence and dazzled by her beauty, he actually believes her to be more intelligent then he. In Book VIII (560 ff.), Raphael quickly detects this flaw and warns him of it, but only after the Fall does Adam realize that the love that "refines / The thoughts, and heart enlarges, [and] hath his seat / In Reason, and is judicious" (VIII, 590), the "heav'nly love" he conceived, is to be enjoyed in the "conversations" that arise from the fruit of Eve's womb and not in carnal love. Physical love, the process whereby he will reproduce more men like himself, though necessary, is dangerous and must be approached with a "well-governed appetite."

Milton, of course, is blind and therefore not troubled by the dangers of beauty. Milton himself may have been subjugated once by beauty; the marriage problems with his first wife are well documented. But Milton has more in common with Adam than marriage difficulties: Adam's creative process is identical to that of Milton. As Adam recalls, following his "colloquy" with God on the virtues of companionship,

> Dazzl'd and spent, [I] sunk down, and sought repair
> Of sleep, which instantly fell on me, call'd
> By Nature as in aid, and clos'd mine eyes.
> Mine eyes he clos'd, but op'n left the Cell
> Of Fancy my internal sight, by which
> Abstract as in a trance methought I saw,
> Though sleeping where I lay, and saw the shape
> Still glorious before whom to awake I stood...
> Manlike, but different sex, so lovely fair,
> That what seem'd fair in all the World, seem'd now

Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd.
(VIII, 457-64, 471-73)

Adam, with the aid of God, creates sexually in the same way Milton declares that he, with the aid of his muse, will create textually. Adam creates not a representation of Eve, but Eve in all her essence. God gave Adam Eve, a product of Adam's fancy, so that the rational conversations that arise out of the fruit of her womb would lead to heavenly love and the glory of God. Adam sins because because he allows his fancy to subjugate him; he cannot govern his fancy. His fancy, of course, is feminine: it is Eve. Milton will not fail because the heavenly muse that he invokes and claims sings to him is constantly governed by him through his language. Like Eve, his muse has been created in his mind in order to communicate the glory of God. Eve, one might argue, is a woman and not a metaphor. Yet for Milton, woman and metaphor are one and the same. They are tools to reproduce the means of conversation. That this theme is essential to Paradise Lost is already apparent in the first few lines of the poem:

Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of **Eden**, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse. (I, 1-6)

In these six lines Milton establishes the subject matter of his poem. "Man's First Disobedience," carnal love, the result of Adam's allowing his fancy to govern his reason, leads to death. But, as Socrates reminded us in The Symposium, love can conquer death if it is heavenly love. This is the love that Adam first

conceived but later perverted. The government of fancy, true wisdom, which Diotoma reminds Socrates is that "which we call temperance and justice,"[8] will eventually produce the "one great Man" from the fruit of Eve's womb. Man can regain his "blissful seat," climb back up into heaven, by privileging the authority of the Word (heavenly love) over the function of biology (carnal love).

Milton's muse, like Eve, is to be loved, but not in the carnal sense. As Mary O'Brien noted in her critique of The Symposium, Socrates spurns the sexual advances of Alcibiades and instead counsels him that it is the meeting of minds from which emerges the birth of what is essentially human. This is also true of Paradise Lost. "The stretched-out intellect has replaced the palpitating womb as the cradle of the life-force" (O'Brien, 129). Milton, like Plato before him, by bringing the palpitating womb inside the male mind transcends the problems of alienation. For it is in the "stretched-out intellect" that the power of the Word brings continuity to the male temporal consciousness.

Milton, in his role as educator, sought to enlighten the mind of his students so that they could conceive the necessary thoughts to participate in the rational conversations of the public realm. The necessary thoughts, of course, are comprised of language. Like documents of law, that language of the mind has to be read and interpreted. These are the two kinds of readers necessary for writing mentioned at the beginning of this study: the private reader and the public reader. It is not

coincidental that the private reader, the Other, often the muse, is feminine; she is there to provide the sexual act. The good public figure, like the good father, is awarded paternity and thus through a socio-historical process, the reproductive labour of the muse. After Eve has eaten the forbidden fruit, God says to her:

> Thy sorrow I will greatly multiply
> By thy Conception; Children thou shalt bring
> In sorrow forth, and to Husband's will
> Thine shall submit, hee over thee shall rule. (X, 193-196)

Biology will result in death. But by moving the womb inside the mind, the Word will give life. It is here, in the mind of the male writer, that the second birth, the notion of male potency, occurs. For here man can move from the private realm to the public. And it is in the public realm that rational conversation will lead to heavenly love. That Thomas Ellwood failed to grasp the importance of male potency as the justification of God's way would have left even the least public of men speechless. But then perhaps Ellwood was ahead of his time and, realizing the unnaturalness of the notion of male potency, foresaw a different path to regain Paradise.

Endnotes - Chapter Three

1. Writes Kerrigan: "Christ's pronouncement on glory in Paradise Regained, contains the principle of all true action; `I seek not mine, but his / Who sent me, and thereby witness **whence I am**' (PR III, 106-107)" (Kerrigan, 154).

2. Writes Hughes:

> Was he thinking of the divine Light that sits with Sapience in Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Beautie (183)? Or simply of the light that we are told "is God" in I John i, 5? Or of the light that Dante said in the Paradise XIII, 1-lvi, is God's creative power as well as an aspect of his essence, and that he calls in the Convito III, xii, "the spiritual and intellectual sun that is God"? Or of St. Augustine's distinction in the Confessions VII, x, between "the light which is God and the light which God has made"? Or was he --as Arnold Williams suggests in The Common Expositor (p.54) --thinking of the discussion by the great Catholic commentator Benedictus Pererius of Dionysius' comparison of the attributes of light to those of God? Or is professor Kelley right in believing (Argument, p.92) that by light in this passage Milton meant simply the physical light which he was cut off by blindness? Or is D.C. Allen right in The Harmonious Vision (p.101) in regarding Milton's invocation as a kind of metaphor comparing the varying intensities of physical light to the spiritual ladder of light by which Marilio Ficino anbd the Florentine Neo-Platonists taught that man rises to the Creator of all light (Hughes, xlvii)?

3. In an essay on Paul De Man and psychoanalysis entitled "Postal Survival, or the Question of the Navel," Shoshana Felman comments on the response by Paul De Man on her own article. The article she presents to De Man concerns Freud and a number of his interpretations of female patient's dreams. Freud names the spot where the dream stops and interpretation begins as the "navel." Writes Felman:

> The navel marks the place where the umbilical cord which connects the infant to the mother has been cut (during delivery); it marks, in other words, at once the **disconnection** and the **connection** between maternal body giving birht and a new born child. The navel of the dream embodies thus, the say in which the dream is, all at once, **tied up** with the unknown and **disconnected** from its

knowledge, disconnected from the knowledge of its own begetting Felman, 63).

Felman goes to analyze to various navel/knots "which constitute the **nodal point**" of the dream (p.66).

De man responds with a short brief answer:

> My only question arises, if I dare say, at the level of the navel. What should we do with the manifest bisexuality of that mark, which separates as much as it unites, and which escapes the difference between genders? The navel is a knot that's cut, and as such, more philosophical than analytical (p.68).

After the knot has been cut, and in our case the metaphors are very compatible, after Milton has completed his text, to ask a question "at the level of the navel," to inquire into Milton's psychogenesis of Paradise Lost, is to ask "at the very level of what one does not know, a level at which one cannot even be sure of one's capacity for asking" (p.69).

4. Milton, **Christian Doctrine**, VI, 295; cited by Kerrigan.

5. Paul De Man writes:

> What makes reading more or less true is simply the predictability, the necessity of its occurence, regardless of the reader or the author's wishes. "Es ereignet sich aber das Wahre" (not **die Wahrheit**) says Holderlin, which can be freely translated, "What is true is what is bound to take place." And in the case of the reading of a text, what takes places is necessary undersatnding. What marks the truth of such understanding is not some abstract universal but the fact that it has to occur regardless of other considerations.... Reading...has to go against the grain of what one would want to happen in the name of what has to happen; this is the same as saying that understanding is an epistemologicla event prior to being an ethical or aesthetic value. (De Man, Foreward, 221-22)

6. Borges has a short story called "Three Versions of Judas" in which he lists many of the men who have seen God in his essence.

> He remembered Elijah and Moses, who on the mountain top covered their faces in order not ot see God; Isaiah, who was terrified when he saw the One whose glory fills the earth; Saul, whose eyes where struck blind on the road to Damascus; the rabbi Simeon ben Aai, who saw paradise and died; the famous sorcerer John of Viterbo, who became mad when he saw the Trinity; the Midrashim, who abhor the impious who utter the **Shem Hamephorash**, the Secret Name of God. Was he not perhaps guilty of that dark crime? Would

> this not be the blasphemy against the Spirit, the one never to be forgiven atthew 12: 31)? Valerius Soranus died for having divulged the hidden name of Rome; what infinite punishment would be his for having discovered and divulged the horrible name of God?

7. Paul de Man, paraphrased from an essay entitled "Heidegger's Exegeses of Holderlain." De Man explains how Heidigger distinguishes between the German poet Holderlain and the metaphysical poets:

> For Heidegger, Holderlin is the greatest of poets ("the poet of poets") because he states the essence (**Wesen**) of poetry. The essence of poetry consists in stating the parousia, the absolute presence of Being. In this, Holderlin differs from the metaphysicians Heidegger dismisses: all, atleast in some degree, are in error; Holderlin is the only one whom heidigger cites as a believer cites Holy Writ. It is not merely a matter of a critique, in the epistemological sense of the term. Just like Holderlin, every great thinker is in the parousia, for it is of the essesenc of of the parousia that no one may escape it. There is, however, an essential difference: Holderlin states the presence of Being, his word is Being present, and he know this is the case; the metaphysicians, on the other hand, state their desire for the presence of Being, but since it is Being's essene to reveal itself by hiding in that which it is not, they can never name it. (Blindness, 250)

De Man, later in the essay writes: "it is the fact that Holderlin says exactly the opposite of what Heiddeger makes him say." I hope that I am not guilty of this. However the muse Milton invokes was present with God at the creation of the world, and God's utterances resulted in light in all its essence and not as a textaul inscription. To justify the ways of God to men, Milton requires the essence of God's law and not just a grphic representaion. 250

8. Plato, <u>The Complete Texts of the Great Dialogues of Plato</u> (Toronto, 1970), p.150; cited by O'Brien, p.131. See chapter one for the full quotaion.

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