Multiple voices and contesting ideologies in John Milton's Paradise Lost

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Multiple voices and contesting ideologies in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

by

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For my parents,

Qinping and Lixian Wang.

No matter where I go, my heart is with you.
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ABSTRACT

Characterized by its internal conflicts, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* invites us to reconsider Bakhtin's assertion that in poetic genres, “artistic consciousness” fully realizes itself within its own language. Milton's abnegation of authorial power enables his free-willed characters to articulate thoughts that are not necessarily his and to compete with the poet's narrating voice for reader's attention. However, treating *Paradise Lost* as a monologic text, feminist critics of Milton in the last three decades assume that the epic is governed by a privileged discourse that reflects Milton's attitudes toward women. As a result, the scholarly investigation of Milton’s representation of women has become, at its best, an interrogation of a single author’s sexual politics.

In this thesis I argue that the various accounts of the female characters (Sin and Eve) in *Paradise Lost* are underpinned by two influential essentialist ideologies of the Renaissance period, namely, the Galenic-Aristotelian notion of women, which constructs the female identity on a set of physiological traits, and the Hebraic-Christian notion of women, which defines gender as a mentality that is most conspicuous during the fall. The dominance of the Hebraic-Christian notion of women in Milton’s epic is concomitant with the epistemological emergence of a new gender discourse during the inception of the Foucauldian classical period, which, though generating a better image of the female, helps facilitate the relegation and domestication of women in patriarchal society.
INTRODUCTION. THE POET AND HIS CHARACTERS

While recognizing John Milton as the author of *Paradise Lost*, which is often appraised as the greatest epic in English literature, most modern readers are unaware that the poet has a different perspective on the issue of authorship. For Milton, everything originates from his God, the “Author of all” (*PL* VIII. 317), and his epic is no exception. Without God's intervention, it is impossible for him to complete his ambitious project. “And chiefly Thou Spirit,” implores the humble blind bard in the opening lines:

> 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  
> Illumin, what is low raise and support;  
> That to the highth of this great Argument  
> I may assert Eternal Providence,  
> And justifie the wayes of God to men. (*PL* I. 17-26)

This prayer conveys an interesting vision of Milton's relation with his God. First, the poet exalts the “Spirit” as the knowing one that holds the truth from the very beginning. Then, after comparing his own consciousness to the “vast Abyss,” which God's will has once impregnated, the poet invites the “Spirit” to brood on his mind and exercise the creating power for a second time. Thus, from Milton's perceptive, he is author only when he is a medium who serves to articulate God's words in his voice. Nonetheless, Milton has no doubt that he is different from the media in the common sense, who would lose their consciousness.
when possessed. Rather, with the confidence that divine intervention is not dictation, Milton offers to assert providence as a free-willed agency of God.

However, to emulate his God, Milton is obliged to abnegate his authorial power over his characters and give free rein to the latter's articulation as well. As a result, the characters in *Paradise Lost* should no longer be regarded as Milton's different poetic voices but as free-willed persons who take on a life free from the author's manipulation. Together they transform Milton's epic into a dialogic text, in which the poet, after giving up his authorial authority, has reduced himself into a character (the narrator) of the poem, who must compete with other voices to “assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men.”

This de-centered view of Milton's *Paradise Lost* invites us to reconsider the issue of gender in the epic, especially in the aspect of what constitutes female identity as the opposite of male identity. Because in *Paradise Lost* Milton's God reserves comment on the gender issue, all voices are able to stand on the same ground to argue about the subject of gender in a true dialogue, and the final arbitrator of the competing opinions expressed in the epic is Milton's reader.

How does this multiplicity of voices affect our understanding of the construction of female identity in Milton's *Paradise Lost*? This is the main question I wish to answer in this thesis. Chapter I provides a critique of feminist criticism of Milton in the past three decades. I argue that the stalemate between Milton's accusers and Milton's defenders is mainly due to the fact that both parties treat Milton's epic as a monologic text, one that is governed by an authoritative, privileged discourse. But Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a tension-filled arena of two conflicting essentialist ideologies, namely, the Galenic-Aristotelian notion of women and the Hebraic-Christian notion of women. Chapter II examines Sin's account of her metamorphosis
during childbirth. I argue that this grotesque picture of the female body suggests a Galenic-Aristotelian notion of women and opens a rupture in Milton's Christian-themed epic. Chapter III explores both the male and female perspectives of gender and suggests that the characterization of Eve represents a Hebraic-Christian version of women, which defines femininity through its relation to the fall. Finally in the conclusion I argue that feminism should use eclectic approaches and choose the sexual politics of the culture instead of a single author's attitudes toward women as its object of study.
CHAPTER I. A CRITIQUE OF FEMINIST CRITICISM OF MILTON

Being at once a monolith in the canon of English literature and the story about the first man and woman, Milton's *Paradise Lost* appeals to feminist literary scholars in many ways. In the past three decades, it has spawned a considerable amount of feminist criticism that falls on a wide spectrum of opinion. Based on their individual interpretations of the sexual politics in *Paradise Lost*, many critics attempt to reconstruct an authentic Miltonic idea of women. But this kind of politicized reading always ends with a labeling of Milton as women's friend or foe. Consequently, feminist criticism of Milton in the past three decades has become an ethical criticism.

Several critics argue that women are immanent, objectified in Milton's poetic world. In “Kinship and the Role of Women in *Paradise Lost*” (1972) Marcia Landy reads Eve in light of woman's role in traditional Western Christian family. Her analysis culminates in the assertion that Milton's Eve represents the stereotyped women who “are either obedient as 'Matron Mother' or disobedient and wanton if they neglect their responsibilities as wife, which signifies motherhood and submissiveness” (Landy 17). Expanding upon this point on in a controversial article published in 1978 entitled “Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflection on Milton's Bogey,” Sandra Gilbert argues that Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a poem satiated with the discourse of male supremacy, which perpetuates the gender stereotypes of women in a society characterized by the practice of male governance. The patriarchal society appropriates power from women during the process of demonization: “for sensitive readers brought up in the bosom of a 'masculinist', patristic, neo-Manichean church, the latent as well as the manifest content of such a powerful work as *Paradise Lost* was (and is) bruisingly real. To women the unholy trinity of Satan, Sin and Eve, diabolically mimicking the holy trinity of
God, Christ and Adam, must have seemed even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to illustrate historical dispossession and degradation of the female principle” (374). Christine Froula supplements Gilbert's argument with a close reading of Eve's account of her awakening in “When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy” (1983). For Froula, the episode about the narcissistic Eve rescued by God's voice at the Edenic lake is the conversion of Eve “from her own visible being in the world to invisible patriarchal authority [...] from being in and for herself to serving a 'higher' power—from the authority of her own experience to the hidden authority of the Tree of knowledge” (“When Eve Reads Milton” 156). In another article entitled “Rewriting Genesis: Gender and Culture in Twentieth-Century Texts” (1988), Froula examines Adam's naming of Eve in book VIII. She argues that this appellation equates Eve's “identity with the maternal function [...] If naming gives Adam power over what he names, then by naming the woman 'mother of all living' he gains power over woman-as-mother—again, in other words, over birth” (“Rewriting Genesis” 200). In short, Froula holds Milton accountable for sustaining the ancient tradition of repressing “women-as-spirit in women-as-flesh,” which “seeks to counterbalance woman's visible privilege of maternal creativity in nature with a morphologically mimetic act of male creativity in the symbolic realm” (“Rewriting Genesis 203, 201).

To these three critics, Milton holds hostile attitudes toward women. Emphasizing “Milton's bogey,” Gilbert is the harshest accuser of the blind poet. Similarly, Froula charges Milton with voiding female creativity through “patriarchal indoctrination” andestablishing patriarchal authority on the image of the “idealized and objectified woman” (“When Eve Reads Milton” 327, 329). Landy, however, recognizes at the outset that “Milton is not a misogynist” because his view of woman “grows out of a widely ramifying sense of familial
relationships which are sanctioned by an externalized divine model” (17), but she nevertheless establishes Milton as a spokesperson for the patriarchal tradition, as she writes: “his [Milton's] portrayal of Eve [...] has captured central aspects of a myth which is being seriously questioned today” (5).

Many critics disagree with Landy, Gilbert, and Froula on the issue of Milton's representation of women. In her article “Milton on Women—Yet Once More” (1974), Barbara K. Lewalski challenges Landy's thesis about Eve's domestic role, arguing that “Milton's Eve participates fully in the entire range of prelapsarian human activities—education, working in and sharing responsibility for the human environment (the garden), discussing and analyzing new experience, exercising her powers of symbolization in naming the plants, composing love poetry and divine praises” (3). Following Lewalski, Joan M. Webber (1980), Diane Kelsey McColley (1983), Joseph Wittreich (1987), Kristin Pruitt McColgan (1994), Joan Bennett (1997), John Shawcross (2005) and others also expressed their disagreement with Landy, Gilbert, and Froula. To briefly summarize, these critics argue that Milton's representation of Eve is a significant departure from the Scriptural characterization of her. According to them, the Eve in Paradise Lost “is superior to Adam in showing the way to redemption and salvation and indeed the hinge upon which redemption and salvation will be effected by the Godhead” (Shawcross 40). She exits Paradise as an ennobled character, transcending gender differentiation and standing for a regenerate humanity. That the last God-inspired dream and the final spoken words are all reserved for her suggest that Eve is not the silenced daughter, wife, and mother in Paradise Lost. In addition, they argue that the words in Paradise Lost that carry misogynist attitudes are all spoken by the fallen characters. But the characters' voices should not be confused with
Milton's. The charges against the poet miss “altogether the finely nuanced critique of misogyny cradled within the text of *Paradise Lost*, as well as the ideological load of its last books” (Wittreich 12). Many of these critics refuse to label Milton as an anti-feminist. And with evidence gleaned from a large corpus of women's early writings, Wittreich further suggests that Milton is “not just an ally of feminists but their early sponsor” (ix). This opinion is the exact antithesis of Gilbert's view on Milton.

Both Milton's feminist accusers and feminist defenders are right to a certain extent, but neither side can completely establish an argument that can withstand scrutiny. On the one hand, Milton's accusers have rendered an accurate account of Eve's subordination to Adam. Neither Eve's innocent perfection before the fall nor her virtuous repentance after the fall fundamentally changes this subordination. All creatures in Milton's universe are perfect at the time of their birth, but they rank differently on the great chain of being. Seraphs are superior to other angels in the same way that man is superior to woman, even though both are created “just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (*PL* III. 98-99). Perfection only indicates a certain ontological status, that is, whether the creature stands or falls, but does not determine a creature's rank on the scale of nature. By the same token, the postlapsarian Eve occupies a subordinate position even though she behaves, as Milton's defenders rightly point out, more nobly than Adam. Shawcross' argument that the reformed Eve is “superior to Adam in showing the way to redemption and salvation” is misleading because “superior” here actually means “morally more respectable” instead of “on a higher rank.” The admirable virtue of Eve does not count as evidence for gender equality in *Paradise Lost*. To draw an analogy, the French heroine Joan of Arc is said to be “superior” to the English King Henry
VI in the sense that the former is more morally respectable, but this respectability does not place her at the King's rank simply because blue is not the color of her blood.

On the other hand, Milton's defenders have made the correct observation that Milton's Adam and Eve have equal shares of God's benevolent love. Eve is neither a defect of nature nor the devil's secret ally or Sin's alter ego. In book X of *Paradise Lost* we find Adam's complaints as follows:

> O why did God,  
> Creator wise, that peopl'd highest Heav'n  
> With Spirits Masculine, create at last  
> This novelties on Earth, this fair defect  
> Of Nature [...] ? (PL X 888-92)

These lines are frequently quoted as evidence of Milton's stereotypical perception of the female gender, but this argument is not without flaw, for it overlooks the fact that in another place, before the fall, Adam uses a completely different rhetoric to address Eve:

> O fairest of Creation, last and best  
> Of all Gods works, Creature in whom excell'd  
> Whatever can to sight or thought to be formed,  
> Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet! (PL IX. 896-99)

In this passage Adam praises Eve as a creature that embodies the heavenly spirit of God. The human father even places Eve above himself and calls her the best work of divine creation. If Milton is a ventriloquist who makes his voice appear to come from Adam, then which passage carries his authentic idea towards women, the accusation that woman is the “defect / Of Nature” or the praise that she is the best work of God? The answer is indeterminable. But
it is unlikely that Milton would view Eve as a defect of creation, for that would eventually point to God as the culprit for Adam and Eve's fall. Such heretic thoughts, as Dennis Danielson asserts, “are not altogether compatible with the piety and reverence that one ought to exhibit in the divine presence” (*Milton's Good God* 107).

The argument that there is a connection between Eve and Satan does not withstand scrutiny, either. Based on Northrop Frye's suggestion that Eve represents “a great mother goddess from whom all deified principles in nature have ultimately descended, even though their fathers are fallen angels” (135), Gilbert groups Eve with Satan and Sin into a negative trinity that parodies the official trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But this treatment contradicts the traditional anti-trinity (Satan, Sin, and Death). The substitution of Eve for Death disrupts the apparent opposition between the Holy Spirit as “a personification” of the divine love and Death as its “obscene parody” (White 338, 341). Besides, in *Paradise Lost* Eve is consistently depicted as the image of Adam and bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. She is said to be the daughter of man and God. If she is to be bound together with other two characters, then she should be first placed into a union with Adam and Milton's God. It is far-fetched to associate her with the fallen angels.

In review of the two strands of the feminist argument on Milton, we can see three limitations. First, in process of this debate only Eve is widely studied. That said, the study of women in *Paradise Lost* is at its best the study of the representation of Eve; the other female character, Sin, has hardly been exposed to the light of feminist critique. The term “‘feminist’ as a descriptor of Milton criticism,” as Janet E. Halley puts it, “has become multivalent, referring both to critics who see Eve as the object of Milton's patriarchal imagination and to
others to whom she is the image of a genuine female subjectivity not created but recognized by a progressive, liberal Milton” (230).

Apart from their obliviousness of the female character Sin, feminist critics of Milton in the last three decades also read Milton's epic as a monologic text, which, in my opinion, accounts for the deadlock of their debate over the representation of women in *Paradise Lost*. They either regard the characters' utterances as Milton's various poetic voices or establish Milton's narrating voice as the governing discourse that determines the meaning and purpose of his epic. In the first case, the critics overlook the internal conflicts within Milton's epic, assuming that characters' attitudes toward women are uniform and consistent with Milton's. In the second case, the critics assume that the narrator's voice overrides other voices. But with the capacity to outgrow Milton's consciousness, the characters in *Paradise Lost* have gained a certain autonomy; thus, it is unreasonable to impute what Satan or Adam says to Milton the poet, nor is it appropriate to assume that Milton's voice reigns in the epic. The authorial power, if there is any, lies in the hand of Milton's God. He “maintains some degree of formalist control, in that he and his readers ultimately seek to refine one final meaning where God 'shall be All in All', but the process depends on the reader to say what God himself has not said, to enter into the authority of an continuing creation” (Johnson 75). Many critics tend to generate their own images of Milton through the analysis of this or that voice without knowing that none of these voices sits on top of others. I think this is the reason why the scholarly investigations of Milton's representation of women end in an impasse of proving or disproving the poet's misogyny.

A third limitation of feminist criticism of Milton is that critics take the text out of its context. They concentrate too much on the issues within the text but ignore the close
relations between interpretative problems and cultural-historical problems. Milton's accusers, arguing for “the profoundly patriarchal basis of Milton's version of the family and women's place in it,” rely on an approach that is essentially “ahistorical in its application of twentieth-century feminist standards onto early modern systems of thought” (Margo 110). Milton's apologists (particularly Shawcross and Wittreich), however, have investigated the early women writers' responses to *Paradise Lost*, but they still need to deepen their understanding of the Renaissance cultural milieu.

No text is created out of a historical vacuum; Milton composed *Paradise Lost* “inside the whale.” The epic is conceived not simply in the poet's mind but also in the depth of a larger consciousness. Milton calls this larger consciousness the Spirit of God, but Louis Althusser would call it “Ideology” or “the Subject par excellence,” which, present from the first, has its own history (1506). Nonetheless, in this case, the relation between the Subject (God) and the subject (Milton) is not established by the act of interpellation but by collaborative production. The poet recognizes that he is a “subject through the Subject and subjected to the Subject” because during the process of creative writing, he intuitively senses that the language of the Subject speaks through him. Consequently, the poet freely obeys the Subject and makes himself the latter's spokesperson. But Milton is unaware that he submits not to one single ideology (i.e. the Christian God) but to the category of ideologies. Therefore, the inner light, which guides the poet to defend his religion, actually turns his epic into an arena of conflicting ideologies. What Milton successfully asserts is not the “wayes” of his Christian God to men but the “wayes” of the categorical Ideology to men.

In this paper I argue that a better framework for interpreting Milton's representation of gender is to place the issue in its historical context. Based on the belief that literary texts
interpenetrate the context, I would like to use the prevailing gender ideologies in England of
the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to contextualize the characterization of Sin and Eve
in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

According to Kate Aughterson, the construction of womanhood in early modern
England is nourished by two influential schools of thought, namely, “the Hebraic-Christian
tradition of equating Eve with the Fall and the Galenic-Aristotalian account of her 'nature'—
that is, her physiological and biological function” (41). These two essentialist ideologies
share the same belief that women are inferior to men and are not qualified for public office.
But they offer different explanations of women's inferiority and incapabilities.

The Hebraic-Christian tradition recognizes the female's equal share of God's
benevolent love and her hope for salvation, but it does not regard the two sexes as equal
partners. For example, Martin Luther comments on Genesis that “For as the sun is more
splendid than the moon (although the moon is also a most splendid body), so also woman,
although the most beautiful handiwork of God, does not equal the dignity and glory of the
male” (qtd. in Maclean 42). Another example is Cornelius a Lapide's commentary on I Cor.
11:7 (“the woman is the glory of the man”):

For woman is equal to man in possessing a rational soul, and both, that is
woman and man, are made in the image of God. But she is the image of man
in a restrictive and analogical sense; because woman was made from man,
after man, inferior to him and in his likeness. It is for this reason that St. Paul
does not say explicitly 'woman is the image of man', but rather 'woman is the
glory of man'; because without doubt, as Alfonso Salmeron rightly pointed out,
woman is an excellent ornament of man since she is granted to man not only
to help him to procreate children, and administer the family, but also in
possession and, as it were, in dominion, over which man may exercise his
jurisdiction and authority. (qtd. in Maclean 11)

Both examples recognize that the female is perfect in her own sex, but she matches the male
only in her ability to worship God, not in other aspects. In addition, during this time period
“women were taught that feminine virtue meant a private, domestic existence, lived in
'disobedience, silence, and chastity’” (Beilin 4). The notion that “women are lesser creatures
belonging to the private domain” is common to influential humanist writers such as Juan
Vives, Thomas Elyot, Richard Mulcaster, and Giovanni Michele Bruto (Beilin 4). Therefore,
the Hebraic-Christian tradition, albeit representing a significant departure from medieval
misogyny, still has some distance from the contemporary culture.

The Galenic-Aristotelian notion of women should be regarded not as the simple
revival of Hellenic science but as a blend of Renaissance intellectual thoughts that have
absorbed at least some elements from ancient physiology. In Aristotelian and Galenic terms,
woman is merely the incomplete version of the man: “Because of lack of heat in generation,
her sexual organs have remained internal, she is incomplete, colder and moister in dominant
humours, and unable to ‘concoct' perfect semen from blood” (qtd. in Maclean 31). However,
this theory gradually became obsolete, thanks to the development of Renaissance anatomy.
“By the end of the sixteenth century, many doctors are convinced that the notion of woman
has changed, and that by the removal of the taint of imperfection she has attained a new
dignity” (Maclean 44). But other elements in Galen and Aristotle's physiology survived into
Renaissance medicine and continued to produce “natural” justification for women's
inferiority. As a result, although woman “is thought to be equally perfect in her sex, she does
not seem to achieve complete parity with man, or does so only at the expense of considerable
dislocation in medical thought” (Maclean 44). The female “is considered to be inferior to
man in that the psychological effects of her cold and moist humours throw doubt on her
control of her emotions and her rationality; furthermore, her less robust physique predisposes
her, it is thought, to a more protected and less prominent role in the household and in
society” (Aughterson 46). In addition, the female is thought to be more inconstant because
“cold and moist objects are subject to metamorphosis” (Maclean 42). This notion of
inconstancy provides the physiological framework for the notion that women are monstrous.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* distinguishes itself as a text that epitomizes both intellectual
traditions. In the next two chapters I argue that the characterization of Sin is mainly based on
the Galenic-Aristotelian tradition, whereas the characterization of Eve is mainly based on the
Hebraic-Christian tradition. In addition, I suggest that these two female characters'
articulations exert different impacts on the coherence of Milton's epic.
CHAPTER II. SIN AND THE GALENIC-ARISTOTELIAN NOTION OF WOMEN

“[Woman,] you live here on earth as the world's most imperfect creature: the scum of nature, the cause of misfortune, the source of quarrels, the toy of the foolish, the plague of the wise, the stirrer of hell, the tender of vice, the guardian of excrement, a monster in nature, an evil necessity, a multiple chimera, a sorry pleasure, Devil's bait, the enemy of angels.”

—Jacques Olivier, An Alphabet of Women's Imperfections and Malice (1617)

In the preceding chapter I mentioned that Sin draws little attention from feminist critics of Milton, but this neglect is understandable. After all, Sin is a minor character who occupies but a few hundred lines in Book II and Book X. She is not directly involved in “Mans First Disobedience,” which is the story's “raison d' être” (Collier xi). It seems convenient, if not expedient, to study Sin as an adjunct to the analysis of Eve's femininity, since the idiosyncratic attributes of Sin, say, pride, vanity, lust, deceitfulness, ambition, and so on, are all passed onto Eve after the human mother falls through the Devil's temptation. Even Sin's serpentinity, the symbol of her monstrousness, becomes visible in the postlapsarian Eve. Adam's following denunciation of Eve explicitly illustrates this point:

Out of my sight, thou Serpent, [...]  
thyself as false  
And hateful; nothing wants, but that thy shape,  
Like his, and colour Serpentine may shew  
Thy inward fraud, to warn all Creatures from thee  
Henceforth, least that too heav'ny form, pretended  
To hellish falsehood, snare them. (PL X. 867-73)
Moreover, Sin and Eve echo one another in many places. For instance, at the hell gate Sin pledges her allegiance to Satan: “Thou art my Father, thou my Author, thou / My being gav'st me; whom should I obey / But thee, whom follow” (PL II. 864-66). These words anticipate what later Eve says to Adam as she entrusts her autonomy to her husband:

O thou for whom

And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh,

And without whom am to no end, my Guide

And Head, what thou has said is just and right. (PL III. 440-43)

Given Sin's minor role and her striking resemblance to Eve, it is easy to assume that Sin can offer us nothing new about Milton's representation of the female gender.

However, Sin is a vital axis in Milton's Paradise Lost, whose complexity resists any expedient grouping of her with Eve. Holding the “powerful Key,” Sin is assigned to a major task: to keep the gates of Hell “for ever shut, which none can pass” (PL II. 774-75). Yet what she keeps close is not merely the world of light beyond the boundary of Chaos; it is also the “perpetual expansiveness” of Milton's epic and the “spacious and grandiose” imagination that the reader is privileged to know (Greene 378). Without her permission, neither Satan's flight nor the narrator's storytelling is possible. Thus, rightly understanding Sin's “potential blocking function,” Maureen Quilligan remarks, “Sin is herself a threshold marker; she figures therefore a bizarre potential that the epic flight (and indeed the poem) will not be achieved, will not spring free of its constraints, or find its true epic expansiveness in Satan's journey across the vast spaces of Milton's created cosmos” (79).

Yet no one in Paradise Lost causes more confusion than Sin does, not only to other characters in the epic but also to readers of the epic. In book II of Paradise Lost the
ambitious Satan sets off from Pandemonium to “waste” God's “whole Creation” (*PL* II. 365). But soon he is disappointed to find his voyage stalked by the gates of hell: “three folds were Brass, /Three Iron, three of Adamantine Rock, / Impenetrable, implal'd with circling fire” (*PL* II. 645-47). To make it worse, the tight gates are guarded by two monsters, one of whom is Sin. The Devil does not recognize his daughter at first, and wonders at the latter's “formidable shape”:

> The one seem'd a Woman to the waste, and fair,
> But ended foul in many a scaly foudl
> Voluminous and vast—a Serpent arm'd
> With mortal sting: about her middle round
> A cry of Hell Hounds never ceasing bark'd
> With wide *Cerberian* mouths full loud, and rung
> A hideous Peal; yet, when they list, would creep,
> If aught disturb'd their noyse, into her woomb,
> And kennel there, yet there still bark'd and howl'd
> With in unseen. Far less abhorrd than these
> Vex'd *Scylla* bathing in the sea that parts
> *Calabria* from the hoarce *Trinacrian* shore:
> Nor uglier follow the Night-Hag, when call'd
> In secret, riding through the Air she comes,
> Lur'd with the smell of infant blood, to dance
> With *Lapland* Witches, while the labouring Moon
> Eclipses at their charms. (*PL* II. 649-66)
In fact, Sin’s *de facto* chimerical shape confounds the reader, too. Ostensibly, Milton's account of Sin's relation to Satan is based on the Epistle of James 1:15: “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” But Milton's characterization of Sin as a half-woman, half-snake figure takes its foundation neither from the Scripture nor from Renaissance tradition. In the course of research I have found that the biblical sin often exists in the mind of Milton's contemporaries as an amorphous concept. Although occasionally the biblical sin is personified by playwrights and writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it never has a generally accepted image on stage or in literature. Among the few different versions, the one in Serafino della Salandra's *Adamo Caduto*, which is also “frequently cited as the source of much of *Paradise Lost*” (White 337), deserves some attention from us. In this religious play there is a scene about Adam's encounter with Sin at the moment he eats the apple. When asked about his origin by Adam, Sin claims to be the son of the first human couple: “without mating flesh / Thou art my father and fair Eve my mother.” Death, he continues, is the incestuous offspring of himself and his mother Eve (Kirkconnell 331-33). Curiously, Sin's gender is male in Salandra's play.

Another instance is discovered in Gower's *Mirour de l'omme*, in which the Devil conceives Sin and then, enamored of his own creation, begets Death upon her (Tatlock 239-40). However, Gower's poem was preserved in only one manuscript and was not published until 1899. Because the chance that Milton had ever heard it is very slim, John S. P. Tatlock hypothesizes that the two poets' “sources are ultimately the same […] The idea is a distinctly medieval one, probably hatched in the brain of one of the more imaginative theological writers” (37). But Robert White contends that Tatlock overlooks the most obvious source of
Sin's allegorical personification. According to White, Sin is modeled inversely on the Son of the Holy Trinity. The two contrast each other as the “personification of Satan's pride and disobedience” versus the embodiment of God's wisdom (White 340). But White still does not explain why Sin is portrayed as a female monster.

What White leaves unanswered is exactly the problem that some eighteenth-century critics were uneasy about. Critic Joseph Addison, for instance, remarks in the English newspaper *Spectator* (No. 273), “I cannot think that Persons of such a Chymerical Existence [Sin and Death] are proper Actors in an Epic Poem; because there is not that measure of Probability annexed to them, which is requisite in Writings of this kind [...]” (qtd. in Miller 70). Samuel Johnson also makes a similar comment in his book *Life of Milton*:

To exalt causes into agents, to invest abstract ideas with form, and animate them with activity, has always been the right of poetry. But such airy beings [Sin and Death] are, for the most part, suffered only to do their natural office, and retire...To give them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to nonentity...This unskilful allegory appears to me one of the greatest faults of the poem (qtd. in Summers 38).

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1 Many theologians have argued about what Christ symbolizes. According to Robert White, “Martin Luther described Christ as reflection in the mind of God and as Word or Wisdom of God, and John Calvin described the son as proceeding from the Father and the Spirit from both the Father and the Son. Protestant divines in England accepted this Trinitarian tradition as doctrine always held by the church of Christ and the only point on which the Roman Church is sound” (339). White also refers the reader to Jan D. Kingston Siggins' *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven, 1970), 14-15; Thomas Rogers' *The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England* (Cambridge, 1854), 43; Johan Pilpot's *The Examination and Writings of John Pilpot* (Cambridge1842), 150.
Addison's and Johnson's objection to Milton's allegorical personification of the biblical sin can be translated into two related questions, namely, “Why is Milton's Sin a female?” and “why does Milton's Sin take a monstrous shape?” Indeed, if the infernal family is, as White argues, the inversion of the Holy Trinity, then why is Sin the only female in the axis of evil? Besides, in most part of *Paradise Lost* Satan is a handsome devil. Then why must Sin become a diabolical goblin? It would make sense, say, if Sin were a male figure who looked like a seraph. Milton's story *per se* does not necessarily need a hideous monster, for it is meant to invoke humankind's repentance, not fear. A cloud of mystery shrouds Milton's design of the character Sin.

Perhaps only Milton could answer the two questions Addison and Johnson might ask. But a relevant question is pertinent to the topic of this paper: “What is the connection between Sin's gender and Sin's shape?” In this chapter I argue that the influence of the biblical sin on Milton's Sin, if there is any, is very limited. Instead, the characterization of Milton's Sin reflects the Galenic-Aristotelian notion of women during the Renaissance period, which frames the definition of gender in a physiological account. This is why Sin's grotesque femininity is constituted mainly by physical attributes, which, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter, have even incorporated some realistic elements about childbirth in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I will start with an examination of the characterization of Sin, and then discuss the essentialist ideology that is invisibly at work in this characterization.

Although biblical sin anthropomorphized and demonized is Milton's invention, the prototype of a half-woman, half snake monster already existed in the works of Milton's literary predecessors. The poet's literary indebtedness to Edmund Spenser is well known. In “Preface to the Fables” *John Dryden* recalls, “Milton has acknowledged to me that Spenser
was his original” (2:247). In fact, Milton's Sin derives from the dragoness Errour in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, who is described as:

Halfe like a serpent horribly dislaide,
But th' other halfe did womans shape retaine,
Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine.
And as she lay upon the durtie ground,
Her huge long taile her den all overspred,
Yet was in knots and many boughtes upwound,
Pointed with mortall sting. Of her there bred
A thousand yong ones, which she dayly fed,
Sucking upon her poisonous dugs, eachone
Of sundry shapes, yet all ill favored:
Soone as that uncouth light upon them shone,
Into her mouth they crept, and suddain all were gone. (*FQ* I. i. 14-16)

There are several parallels between Sin and Errour. Most conspicuously, both are chimeras with monstrous reproductive capability. Sin is the mother of a pack of Hell-hounds, which are “hourly conceived, / And hourly born” (*PL* II. 796-97). Sin's canine offspring ceaselessly return to her womb and “barked and howled” from within, which is a slightly different version of the newborns invading Errour's body through the mouth.

Milton's Sin is also modeled on the monster Scylla in Graeco-Roman mythology. A passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* can demonstrate this borrowing:

Scylla venit mediaque tenus descenderat alvo,
cum sua foedari latrantibus inguina monstris
adspicit ac primo credens non corporis illas
esse sui partes, refugitque abigitque timetque
ora proterva canum, sed quos fugit, attrahit una
et corpus quaerens femorum crurumque pedumque
Cerbereos rictus pro partibus invenit illis:
statque canum rabie subiectaque terga ferarum
inguinibus truncis uteroque extantae coercet.² (Met XIV. 59-67)

This time Milton does not hesitate to acknowledge the source of his Sin. In line 660 of book II he mentions the name of Scylla. According to George Butler, the phrase “Cerberean mouths” in line 55 also directly translates Ovid's “Cerberos rictus,” so it is likely that Milton has Ovid's above-quoted passage in mind when composing his epic (20).

However, the way that Milton utilizes Spenser's Errour and Ovid's Scylla raises some questions. On the one hand, it seems that Milton's reliance on Spenser's monster is too excessive. The “mortall sting” that he borrows from the “long taile” of Spenser's Errour is not functional. This deadly “weapon” has no use to her because mortality is brought to human by Death's fatal dart, not by Sin's sting. On the other hand, it seems that Scylla does not fit into Milton's epic. At first thought, the monster is invoked when Milton compares Sin's canine offspring with the dogs that “Vex'd Scylla” for the purpose of highlighting the

² “Now Scylla came; and, wading to the waft, / Beheld her hips with barking dogs imbrac't. / Starts backe: at first not thinking that they were / Part of her felfe; but rates them, and doth feare / Their threatening jawes; but those, from whom she flies, / She with her hales. Then looking for her thighes, / Her legs, and feet; in stead of them she found / The mouths of Cerberus, inviron'd round With rau'ning Curses: the backs of falvage beafts / Support her groine; whereon her belly refts.” The English translation comes from George Sandy's Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished, published in Oxford 1632, reprinted as part of the Garland series entitled The Renaissance and the Gods by John Hopkins University Press in 1976.
former's ferocity. But if this is true, then Milton must have chosen the wrong object of comparison, for there is nothing special about Scylla's dogs except that they grow out of Scylla's torso. For Ovid's readers, these dogs *per se* are not frightening; the female body with its lower part replaced by gaping mouths is. This conspicuous “mistake” is pointed out by Richard Bentley in his annotation of lines 659-666 in his *Paradise Lost, a New Edition*:

> Let the Editor here too take back his intruded Comparisons, *scylla* and *her Dogs*: which common Fable he has yet deprav'd in the telling: for those Dogs were incorporate with her and always stuck saft, whether she *bath'd* in the Sea, or not [...] Here *scylla* vex'd *Ulysses's Ship*, when she devour'd six of his Seamen; not with her Dogs, but with her six Heads: but hence the Editor takes *vEXESSE*, and makes the Dogs to *vex Scylla* herself.

So why does Milton borrow Errour and Scylla? And most importantly, why does he accommodate the two monsters at the risk of losing his originality?

Many would assume that it is because Milton is an admirer of Spenser and Ovid. But another explanation is that here Milton epitomizes a knowledge system that underscores representative Classical and Elizabethan texts, as the epic function requires. He reserves the iconic bodily properties of Errour and Scylla—the useless sting and the non-terrifying dogs—so his reader would immediately recognize the connection between Sin, Errour, and Scylla. However, since the subject (author) and Subject (Ideology) collaborate in the

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3 Flannagan remarks that “The epic, and especially *Paradise Lost*, also can be viewed as an anatomy, a compendium of all knowledge on one subject [...] He seems to want to teach his reader how to be civilized, but in a Christian and humanistic setting. He actively competes with the 'feigning' subject matter of classical and romantic epics, replacing what he considers the blind superstition of classical darkness or Counter-Reformation Catholicism with the true inner light of his own Protestant Christianity. Milton's epic, in its scope and in its display of knowledge and the wisdom of the ages, [...] is an exhaustive treatise on the subject of the Fall of humankind” (305).
production of a text, we can also say that the ideology that Milton is obliged to summarize reproduces itself through the poet's pen in the same way that it once engaged Ovid's and Spenser's pen. For this reason, Milton's Sin is not merely a recycled character; she is also an image that functions to transmit a highly-charged gender ideology.

This ideology is the Galenic-Aristotelian notion of women I mentioned in chapter I. It has a tendency to view women as monsters. According to Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, “Aristotle thinketh that the woman or female is nothing else but an error or aberration of nature, which he calleth by a metaphor taken from travellers which miss of their way, and yet at length attain their journey's end; yea he proceedeth further and saith that the female is a *by-work* of prevarication, yea the first monster in nature” (qtd. in Aughterson 55). This notion of “woman=monster” exerts a great influence on the Renaissance mind. The epigraph of this chapter comes from the preface of a popular tract written by Jacques Olivier, which, according to Ruth Kelso, “ran into fourteen reprinting during the [seventeenth] century and one more in 1730” (6). Originally written in French, Olivier's tract is “translated into English in 1662 by an anonymous author (T.M.). Several rather worn editions of the original French versions are available in British libraries, suggesting an eager English readership” (Aughterson 44). Even without any alteration, Olivier's misogynist tract matches Milton's Sin perfectly, suggesting not only the ubiquity of the Galenic-Aristotelian notion of women but also its permeability, that is, its volition to diffuse across the boundary of text in order to leave its mark onto the timeless realm of art.

But what social reality empowers this ancient ideology to become highly charged again in an already Christianized Renaissance England? Is this social reality also reflected in the
configuration of Sin? And if so, how is it presented in a literary way? The rest of this chapter is devoted to these questions.

Literature often speaks allegorically of reality, so let us go back to the epic and retrieve an account of how Sin becomes a monster. This account may give us some clue about where and how we can find the source. Between lines 747 and 802 of book II Sin relates to Satan the story of her birth and transformation. According to her, right at the moment when Satan is plotting “the bold conspiracy against Heav'n's King,” she springs from the left side of Satan's head. Originally, she is “in shape and count'nance bright, / [...]
shinning heavn'ly fair, a Goddess arm'd” (PL II. 759). But as soon as the defeated Satan and his cohort are “Driv'n headlong from the Pitch of Heavn, down /Into this Deep” (PL II. 772-73), Sin is also expelled from Heaven. While guarding the gate of Hell, the pensive Sin gives birth to Death, the hideous product of her incest with Satan:

At last this odious offspring whom thou [Satan] seest
Thine own begotten, breaking violent way,
Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain
Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
Transformed [...]. (PL II. 781-85)

Death rapes her, and the rape begets a pack of hellish hounds:

These yelling Monsters that with ceasless cry
Surround me [Sin], as thou sawst, hourly conceiv'd
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 bowls, their repast; then bursting forth
Afresh with conscious terrors vex me round,
That rest or intermission none I find. (*PL II. 795-802*)

Sin's grotesqueness stems from her snaky “taile” as well from the parasitic hounds. Both are related to childbirth: the former results from the delivery of Death, while the latter exists in an endless delivery. But delivery here entails not only the action of giving birth but also the transformation of Sin's body. While it is easy to see that the birth of Death deforms Sin's “nether shape,” certain clarification must be made to show why the birth of hellish hounds also leads to the changes of Sin's shape. After all, the canine monsters are modeled on Scylla's dogs. Like their prototypes, these heinous offspring are not separable from Sin's self because “Sin's body spills over its own boundaries and the demarcation between the body and its products is erased” (Magro 105). Hence, here I treat the hounds as Sin's progeny with Death as well as part of Sin's transformed body.

If we also bring Spenser's Errour and Ovid's Scylla into perspective, we can see that these two female monsters actually fit well into Milton's epic. Errour's proliferation provides a model for Sin's hourly conception. Scylla's metamorphosis serves as a paradigm for Sin's transformation. In addition, the Night-Hag Milton introduces between lines 662 and 666 offers an antecedent for linking childbirth with metamorphosis. The Night-Hag is a demoness who haunts childbirth. “Lur'd with the smell of infant blood,” she appears during the “labouring Moon.” She also dances at the nocturnal gatherings of “Lapland Witches,” who, according to Sámi⁴ superstition, “could change shape and travel even great distances in the

⁴ Sami are the indigenous people of Lapland.
shape of animals or as a gust of wind” (Lehtola). Thus, it is possible that the characters Errou, Scylla, and Night-Hag in the quoted passage, are all meant to weld delivery and metamorphosis into one piece.

But Sin's metamorphosis during her delivery causes some trouble in the epic. To begin with, Sin has the same angelic essence as her father, but her cephalic birth in Heaven does not deform Satan's head. There is no obvious reason why after delivery one turns into a monster whereas the other retains his angelic form. It is tempting to think that Sin's body degenerates because she is cast into hell. But the fall, in both its literal and figurative meanings, does not matter so much. Neither Satan nor his cohort instantly loses their original form when they fall (because of rebelling against God) into hell. It is only after Satan brings destruction to paradise that the princes of hell are changed into “a crowd / Of ugly Serpents” (PL X. 538-39). Their metamorphosis is the final punishment God reserves for the unrepentant. However, Sin's metamorphosis is not God's punishment—no verdict is ever rendered to her. She is more like her own cause of change. Moreover, compared to Satan's painless metamorphosis (Satan is unaware of its occurrence), Sin's is characterized with great physical suffering and mental distress, making hers the most wretched scene in Paradise Lost. If Satan is the culprit for all the heinous crimes in Milton's universe, then it seems unfair that Sin suffers more than he does. These paradoxes cannot be solved by Christian theology, so I believe the narrative space between lines 747 and 802 of book II is a significant rupture in Milton's religious poem. Neither God's ways nor the poet's interpretation of the ways shed some useful light onto this part of the poem. Although it seems to be a poetic interpretation of James 1:15, the real substance is no longer Christian material. The biblical exterior is only a cunning disguise. Some new wine has been poured into the old bottle.
Then, does Milton deliberately create this rupture? This question should be differentiated from the question of whether Milton deliberately imports non-Christian elements into his epic. *Paradise Lost* has stunning inclusions of pagan myth, folklore, superstitions, occult, witchcraft, knowledge, and as Addison remarks, Milton wishes to show his acquaintance “with the whole Circle of Arts and Sciences” (qtd. in Svendson 10). But he uses them purposefully as a way to “replace all human knowledge as it was perceived” by his predecessors “with his own system of history, natural science, and theology” (Flannagan 305). Milton believes that “Bad angels [...] are able to wander all over the earth, the air, and even heaven” to deceive humankind (*De Doctrina Christiana* i 9, YP vi 347), so he commits himself to striking down idols with his iconoclastic hammer. In book I Milton demonstrates that pagan deities—Isis, Osiris, Baal, Rimmon, Saturn, and Jove, to name a few—are all Satan's cohort. In book II he hints that Sin is the goddess Athena. In this way Milton reveals that the Greeks “had only the fallen manner of knowing, a secondary knowledge based on signs or seeming” (Quilligan 91). Sin's allusions to Scylla, to the Night-Hag, to “Lapland Witches” and to Athena can all be regarded as strategic tactics to expose the traces of Christian truth in pagan myth and “to involve the reader in the search for the remnants of truth and beauty through all the forms and faces of things”(McColley 50). But Sin's metamorphosis does not serve this purpose. For this reason, the rupture it opens should not be regarded as Milton's intention. Rather, it is a moment when the subservient ideology, i.e.  

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5 In *Areopagitica*, however, Milton compares the state of truth to the dismembered body of Orisis.  
6 “Rimmon was a god of the Syrians who had a temple at Damascus located at the juncture of the two rivers” (Flannagan 369).  
7 Night Hag is associated with the Roman goddess of crossroad, Hecate.
the Galenic-Aristotelian notion of women, escapes from the confinement of the dominant ideology (the Hebraic-Christian notion) and finds its way to the text.

Then what enables the Galenic-Aristotelian notion of women to make its breakthrough in the narrative space of *Paradise Lost*, which is arguably totalized by God's scheme? I think the clues are detectable in what characterizes the compound of Sin's delivery/metamorphosis: the great physical suffering and mental distress that Sin experiences. In my opinion, they reflect some historical truths about the Renaissance childbirth and about the perception of female reproduction at this time. Here I would like to make four connections.

First, the delivery/metamorphosis is accompanied by great pain. Death emerges from Sin's body in a “violent way,” and the canine dogs “gnaw” her “bowls” without mercy. There is no doubt that four hundred years ago, giving birth to a child would have been a trial of the mother's endurance, just to consider that even today it is still anything but an enjoyable experience. But what distinguishes this pain is that it is caused by some “strong-willed” fetuses. Death is said to be “self-begotten,” and so do his canine offspring. They can cause “rueful throes” to the womb for their own benefit, and they already have the command over their “prodigious motion” even before their birth. This independence from the mother may correspond to the belief among Milton's contemporaries that “the infant was physically active in its birth” (Louis Schwartz 215). Accordingly, it is the viable fetus that initiates and is in charge of its own birth; the mother, in contrast, plays a passive role.

Second, the delivery of Death results in the deformation of Sin's lower half. It is said that Death “Tore through” her “entrails,” causing the transformation of the “nether shape.” But the “entrails” here should be construed as the vagina instead of the intestines or other
organs in the abdominal cavity. The injury to Sin's entrails reminds us of the tearing of the tissues during childbirth. However, in my understanding, a certain amount of tearing is common and by no means irrecoverable, so the deformation of Sin's “nether shape,” which causes damage to her bowels, may metaphorically speak of certain severer wounds. According to Louis Schwartz, “Practices that led to permanent external disfigurement of women were very common in the period” (216). For example, a midwife and obstetric surgeon named Percival Willughby records in his book that untrained midwives sometimes “went for a knife, a makeshift hook, or manual dilation of the cervix and vagina when more sensible, gentler techniques could do the job with greater safety and less pain” (Louis Schwartz 216). This example speaks of the prevalence of disturbingly harmful obstetric practices among undertrained midwives in Milton's time.

Moreover, Death should not be associated with live-born babies, for the shadowy figure has no sign of life at all. And in cases of stillbirth, women in Milton's time would be subject to severer injuries than in cases of normal births. In The Midwives Book (1671), Jane Sharp writes, “when a Child comes to be dead in the womb, and is of full age to be born; [...] it cannot help the woman because it stirs not, nor can it be turned that it may be brought forth but with great difficulty” (qtd. in Louis Schwartz 171). As mentioned earlier, in the Renaissance there was the belief that the fetus, instead of the mother, plays the active role in birth. Thus, the dead fetuses, which cannot affect their births, were removed manually, which usually involved the “dismemberment of the dead infant with special cutting tools and hooks” and often the laceration of the inside of a woman's womb (Louis Schwartz 218). Therefore, the transformation of Sin's lower body may paint with a realistic brush the disfiguration of women's genitals due to underdeveloped obstetric knowledge.
Third, Sin also suffers from the burden of ceaseless pregnancy. The canine monsters are “hourly conceiv'd / And hourly born,” giving Sin's body a forever changing shape. Their to-and-fro movements seem to follow an endless breeding cycle. This picture is reminiscent of women's repetitive pregnancy throughout their fertility years in Milton's time. In “The Woman of Renaissance,” Margaret L. King summarizes:

Most Renaissance women became mothers, and motherhood was their profession and identity. Their adult lives (from their mid-twenties in most social groups, from adolescence in the elites) were a cycle of childbirth and nursing and childbirth again. Women below the elite classes gave birth every twenty-four to thirty months. The intervals between births were governed by the period of lactation, which limited fertility; [...] Wealthy women bore even more babies than poor ones. (207)

Given such an “appallingly high” birth rate (MacLaren 22), the belief that woman's body is forever changing does not sound absurd at all—does not her belly grow and recede all the time?

Finally, while telling her pains in a pathetic way, Sin does not forget to place an equal emphasis on her mental distress. In her account Sin recalls her “fear and pain” during the birth of Death and the “conscious terrors” during the birth of the hellish hounds. She is terrified by her offspring. This may correspond to the fact that childbirth in the Renaissance England is very risky: “A conservative estimation is that the women of the middle and upper classes in the sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century London were dying in birthbed at the rate of approximately one death per forty births” (Eccles 125). But according to Jean-Louis Flandrin, the rate of the general population is higher: “For many women, 'unkindly'
labor meant death: perhaps as many as 10 percent of mothers died as a consequence of childbirth; even the more conservative estimate of 2.5 percent for England in the late Renaissance is five or six times higher than the rate recorded in the nineteenth century” (5). In fact, Milton's first two wives, Mary Powell and Katherine Woodcock, both “died of childbed complications” (Louis Schwartz 212). The former gave birth to a daughter, Deborah, and died three days later in 1652; the latter gave birth to a daughter in October 1657 and passed away in February 1658 (Campbell 137, 176, 178). Milton must have had fresh memories of these tragedies during the course of composing *Paradise Lost*.

Childbirth is such a dreadful experience that even after the delivery the nightmare does not go away from Sin's mind. But this lingering terror is unique to Sin, just to consider the fact that the devil has even forgotten that he begets a daughter at all. Many women of Milton's time who survived childbirth were still be subject to trauma. In *Arraignment of Lewd, idle, froward and unconstant women* (1615) Joseph Swetnam records that “women justly viewed childbearing with 'great terror': 'there is no disease that a man endureth that is one half so grievous or painful as child-bearing to a woman’”(qtd in King 4). It seems that the fear of childbirth, which is crystallized into Sin's “conscious terrors” was once epidemic in early modern England.

Some elements of reality extracted from the birth-beds of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are blended into the scenes of Sin's suffering, although they appear in a distorted way. But childbirth at this time was not the business of church fathers but of doctors and midwives who had more exposure to the Galenic-Aristotelian theory of women than

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8 There is another possibility that Katherine Woodcock died of consumption. See Gordon Campbell's *A Milton Chronology* 178. Milton had four children with Mary Powell (Anne, Mary, John, Deborah); one daughter with Katherine Woodcock (Katherine). Both John and Katherine died young.
others. Renaissance medicine is greatly influenced by Greek physiology. The doctors and midwives may not agree with all of Galen's or Aristotle's original points, but they take physiology seriously. For instance, Helkiah Crooke disapproves some of Galen's and Aristotle's opinions, yet in *Microcomographia* he still concludes that “universally men are hotter than women, males than females, all well in regard of their natural temper as that which is acquired by diet and the course of life,” which is but a variation of the the theory of four humors (qtd. in Aughterson 56). Similar cases have also been discovered in Nicolas Culpeper's *A Dictionary for Midwives; or a Guide for Women in their Conception, Bearing and Suckling their Children*; Nicholas Fontanus' *The Woman's Doctor*; and an anonymous text *The Complete Midwife's Practice Enlarged*. All these texts were first published in the 1650s. It seems that the birth-beds in Renaissance England are enclaves of the Galenic-Aristotelian ideology inside Christendom. This subservient ideology finds a secret back door in Milton's epic and makes a rupture through Sin's account of herself. But is this notion of women confirmed by Eve's account of herself, or is it challenged? This is the main issue I am going to discuss in next chapter.
CHAPTER III. EVE AND THE HEBRAIC-CHRISTIAN NOTION OF WOMEN

Reading *Paradise Lost* involves constantly changing perspectives. In “Rethinking Voyeurism and Patriarchy: the Case of Paradise Lost” Regina Schwartz observes that throughout the story of Milton's epic the reader is “directed to follow someone else's line of sight” (85). Most of the time we join Satan's gaze. It is through his eye that we survey the burning Pandemonium, the “Illimitable” Chaos, “th' Empyreal Heav'n,” and the pendent new world. Also, as I discussed in the preceding chapter, the reader's encounter with the monster Sin at the hell gate is made possible by his viewing. Interestingly, our first sight of Eve is also implicated in Satan's act of seeing.

At the outset of book IV of *Paradise Lost* the reader learns that Satan finally makes his entrance into Eden. Perching on the tree of life “like a Cormorant,” the fiend “Saw undelighted” the first human couple walking gracefully in the paradise as “Two of far nobler shape erect and tall, / Godlike erect, with native Honour clad / In naked Majestie seemd Lords of all” (*PL* IV. 196, 286, 288-90). Technically, this is the debut of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. The sexual difference between the two humans is immediately introduced as an attempt to explain why they are “Not equal, as thir sex not equal seemed” (*PL* IV. 295). Adam and Eve are described as follows:

For contemplation hee and valour formed,

For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace,

Hee for God only, shee for God in him:

His fair large Front and Eye sublime declar'd
Absolute rule; and Hyacinthin Locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad:
Shee as a vail down to the slender waste
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Disheveled, but in wanton ringlets wav'd
As the Vine curls her tendrils, which impli'd
Subjection, but requir'd with gentle sway,
And by her yielded, by him best received,
Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet reluctant amorous delay. (PL IV. 297-311)

This passage is mainly about gender difference and gender relations. In lines 297-298, masculinity, aligned with “contemplation” and “valour,” is contrasted with femininity, which manifests itself in “softness” and “sweet attractive Grace.” Yet the binary of gender difference is biased. Adam's masculinity is privileged over Eve's femininity, as the line “Hee for God only, shee for God in him” indicates. An account of Adam and Eve's physiological difference, which runs from line 299 through 311, further reinforces the differentiation of masculinity and femininity. In the footnote of The Riverside Milton Roy Flanngan comments that “A large forehead ('Front') was supposed to indicate intelligence, as in the modern 'egghead'. An 'Eye sublime' would also presumably be looking upward (compare the Latin adverb sublime, 'aloft'), at least aiming toward Heaven and God” (451). Along with that, I would also add that Adam's “shoulders broad” would imply a physical strength. Thus, in this passage we can find three correspondences. The “large Front” points to Adam's
“contemplation”; the “shoulders broad” to his “valour”; and his “Eye sublime” to “He for God only.” By the same token, Eve's physical attributes reflect her femininity. Her “slender waste” is a metonym for her pliable body. As a sign of her “softness,” it recalls the imagery about Eve being supported by Adam: “[she] Of conjugal attraction unreproved, / And meek surrender, half embracing leaned / On our first father” (PL IV. 492-95). Because of her softness, she needs support. Her hair, however, has significance in two ways. On the one hand, the “wanton ringlets” indicate an innocent beauty which will soon degenerate into flirting attractiveness in book IX. On the other hand, the image of her hair “as a vail” brings into play the teaching of Paul: “a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man […] if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering” (1 Cor. 11: 7, 15). From this perspective, it is not difficult to see that this picture of Eve's long hair alludes to the principle of “She for God in him” in line 299. These correspondences suggest that here physiology is used to explain gender difference.

As I mentioned in the preceding chapter, physiology is the cornerstone of the Galenic-Aristotelian tradition during the Renaissance period. Then, does the above-quoted passage imply that the presentation of Eve's femininity continues to perpetuate the essentialist ideology underpinning the characterization of Sin? To answer this question, we need to first bear in mind that this account is filtered through Satan's perspective. In my opinion, it may not be sheer coincidence that the account of gender difference is offered by Satan the voyeur, for the fiend and his legion are originators of heresy in Milton's universe. From Milton's point of view, pagan thoughts contain certain elements of truth, but the truth
appears only in distortion because it is told by the fallen angels who appear to pagans as deities.

But Eve means so much to the Christian religion that if she is presented in the heretic tradition, the entire edifice of Christian teaching will collapse. To define the femininity of the first woman on earth in Christian ways is a necessity for Milton's religious belief as well as for his puritan England. Therefore, Satan's physiological account must be re-interpreted by another voice from Christian point of view. Of the dramatic personae in *Paradise Lost*, who can carry out this task?

Maybe Milton's God? Undeniably, he is the paragon that embodies the principles of the Christian faith. Nothing about Eve is alien to the omniscient God, but the problem is that the knowledge of God remains inaccessible to the reader, for how could it be possible for one to see through God's eyes? In *Paradise Lost* Milton's God hardly mentions Eve, nor does he differentiate gender. To give an example, when he announces that “For Man will heark'n to his glozing lies / And easily transgress the sole Command / Sole pledge of his obedience” (*PL* III. 93-95), God uses the words “Man” and “he” generically, speaking of Adam and Eve “collectively as founding parents of the race” while assigning “the guilt in terms of both as first 'Man' initiating original sin” (Revard 70). Therefore, Milton's God does not provide anything to counterbalance Satan's account.

Then what about the narrator, i.e. Milton's poetic persona? His panoramic view is similar to God's, but unlike the reticent God, the narrator is willing to share whatever he knows. Inspired by the inner light and endeavoring to “assert Eternal Providence / And justifie the wayes of God to men,” the narrator tells the story of “Mans First Disobedience”
as a faithful expansion of Genesis. I think he is the one that redefines gender in the Hebraic-Christian tradition.

We should use the narrator's preoccupation with the fall as the key to understand his presentation of gender. In *Paradise Lost* the fall is central to the story (maybe this explains why in the opening lines the narrator unequivocally declares that his epic is about “Mans First Disobedience”). Given the significance of the fall, especially in terms of its impact on humanity, it is not hard to see that nowhere else could the narrator provide a better Christian account of gender difference than during the fall. I think this is the reason why in the narrator's account Adam and Eve fall in completely different ways. Here I shall compare the first human couple’s behaviors in three aspects and suggest how gender difference is tacitly recommended by them.

First, Eve is susceptible to influences in her fall. The “credulous Mother” does not stand firmly against the coaxing persuasion (*PL* IX 644). Her judgment is weak. The serpent tells Eve to dismiss “Those rigid threats of Death,” saying “ye shall not Die: How should ye? by the Fruit? it gives you Life / To knowledge” (*PL* IX. 685-87). According to the narrator, these “words replete with guile / Into her heart too easie entrance won” because Eve believes that the “perswasive words” are “impregn'd /With Reason [...] And with Truth” (*PL* IX. 733-34, 737-39). Adam, in contrast, makes his own conclusions. The human father is too intelligent not to know what is going on. In the minute that he bites on the apple, he is still clear-headed. The narrator emphasizes that he is “not deceav'd” (*PL* IX. 999).

Second, Eve is narcissistic. Blinded by the serpent's flattery about her beauty, she believes that she is the queen of the universe. By eating the apple she wishes to gain more power and obtain the knowledge of good and evil. But Adam is considerate, acting like a
romantic hero. He knows well that eating the apple means disobedience to God and disobedience to God is death. After Eve tells him about her transgression, “Speechless he stood and pale” (PL IX. 895). Nevertheless he remembers that Eve is made of his rib, so there is a “Bond of Nature” between them. Thus, “as one from sad dismay / Recomforted, and after thoughts disturbed / Submitting to what seemd remediless,” he secretly makes up the mind to die with Eve (PL IX. 917-19). He falls for his obligation and love.

Third, during the fall Eve demonstrates a lack of restraint. Even before the serpent fully convinces her, she has already fixed her gaze on the apple:

Mean while the hour of Noon drew on, and wak'd
An eager appetite, rais'd by the smell
So savorie of that Fruit, with desire,
Inclinable now grown now to touch or taste,
Solicitated her longing eye. (PL IX. 740-43)

As soon as the serpent assures her that she will not die, “her rash hand in evil hour / Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck'd, she eat” (PL IX. 780-81). And she eats in indulgence. According to the narrator, “Greedily she ignor'd without restraint, / And knew not eating Death: Satiate at length, / And hight'nd as with Wine, jocond and boon” (PL IX. 791-93). In a footnote to The Riverside Milton Roy Flannagan remarks that “Eve's gluttony in this case also has an intoxicating effect on her, making her 'high' as if she were drinking wine to excess. She is satiated in the bad sense of the word, and she is almost hysterically mirthful and companionable” (609). Thus, during her eating the mind has already lost control over the body. In contrast, Adam is self-controlling. When Eve “gave him of that fair enticing Fruit / With liberal hand: he scrupl'd not to eat / Against his better knowledge” (PL IX. 996-98).
According to the *OED*, the word “scruple” not only means “to hesitate, to be reluctant to do something,” but can also mean “To doubt, question, hesitate to believe (a fact, allegation, etc.); to question the truth, goodness, or genuineness of” (entry 2). In this sense, the word “scruple” implies that Adam retains restraint throughout his fall. This echoes the narrator's early observation that Adam is a reliable person who has “calm mood” (*PL* IX. 920).

These three contrasts convey several gender stereotypes, assigning naiveté, passivity, self-interest, vanity, and unpredictability to the female; intelligence, bravery, reasoning, determination, and consideration to the male. Interestingly, they seem to affirm rather than to contradict Satan's views: “softness” and “sweet attractive Grace” are essences of femininity whereas “contemplation” and “valour” are essences of masculinity. The only difference is that in the narrator's account gender difference is associated with the fall instead of with physiology.

In the Bible Adam and Eve are always represented by the narrator's voice. But in *Paradise Lost* the same man and woman suddenly begin to present themselves in their own words. Three episodes in books IV, V, and VIII deserve some attention. In these episodes Adam and Eve recount their respective awakenings and dreams, allowing the reader to distill a sense of masculinity and femininity through their recollections. As Milton's poetic voice is in a true dialogue with Adam and Eve's voices, how do these voices interact with each other? Is the narrator's definition of gender eventually validated by the first couple's respective accounts?

In the rest of this chapter I will offer a close reading of the above-mentioned three episodes. Based on a comparison between the couple's recollections, I argue that Adam's masculinity is associated with the fall positively whereas Eve's femininity is associated with
the fall negatively. This difference, which becomes apparent during the fall, bears testimony to the narrator's definition of gender difference.

However, I must first entertain a doubt that the reader may have. The episodes I mentioned all occur before the fall. Then how could it be possible for the fall, an event that has not happened yet, to contribute to the construction of masculinity and femininity? The best way to resolve this doubt is to bring into perspective the fact that Milton's great epic is, as Kay G. Stevenson puts it, a meticulously woven web (127). The fall does not occur out of the blue, but is crafted with anticipatory detail. The first two humans, even in their paradisaical bliss, are related to the pending fall with their fallible perfection, as Raphael reminds Adam: “God made thee perfet, not immutable” (PL V. 524). That Adam's and Eve's perfection is real but not absolute “constituted the Reformers' doctrine of original righteousness (justitia originalis)” (Musacchio 69).

But Adam and Eve's fallible perfections are not necessarily the same. The dissimilarity of these two fallible perfections constitutes gender difference. In other words, Eve's femininity is essentially a female fallibility, which distinguishes itself from Adam's masculine fallibility. This distinction can be illuminated by a comparison between Adam and Eve's respective accounts of themselves during their awakening process.

In book VIII Adam hosts a reception for Raphael, who is sent to him by God. Adam tells his guest his beginning in order to sustain the latter's stay:

As new wak't from soundest sleep
Soft on the flourie herb I found me laid
In Balmie Sweat, which with his Beames the Sun
Soon dri'd, and on the reaking moisture fed.
Strait toward Heav'n my wondring Eyes I turned,
And gaz'd a while the ample Skie, till rais'd
By quick instinctive motion up I sprung,
As thitherward endevoring, and upright
Stood on my feet; about me round I saw
Hill, Dale, and shadie Woods, and sunnie Plaines,
And liquid Lapse of murmuring Streams; by these,
Creatures that livd, and movd, and walk'd, or flew. (PL VIII. 253-63)

Albert Fields asserts that “Adam's “first orientation is to his environment: that which was created before him and those externals necessary to self-discovery” (396). I agree with this point, but I think the survey of the environment is also necessary to the discovery of the universal order. Before he surveys his realm, Adam first looks “Strait toward Heav'n,” (echoing the image of “eye sublime” in book IV ) which is a higher sphere, the world of God. Adam realizes the magnitude of heaven is unparalleled, so he calls only the sky “ample,” not the “Hill, Dale, and shadie Woods, and sunnie Plaines, / And liquid Lapse of murmuring Streams.” The sun in the sky is the first object that interests him, and he discovers that his creation is enabled by the sun. For the sunshine's heat dries his body, which is initially made of dust. Adam learns from this observation that creative power comes from the realm above him, as he later concludes in lines 274-275: “Thou Sun, said I, faire Light, / And thou enlight'nd Earth, so fresh and gay.”

Following this survey of the environment, Adam shifts his attention to himself: “My self I then persu'd, and Limb by Limb /Survey'd, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran /With supple joints, as lively vigour led” (PL VIII. 267-69). The knowledge of his
capabilities stimulates him to know who he is, and “where, or from what cause” (PL VIII. 270). After discovering his likeness with the “fair Creatures” which “live and move,” he is stricken by a speculation of creation: “Not of my self; by some great Maker then,” who must be “In goodness and in power preeminent” (PL VIII. 278-79). Therefore, “in a Platonic way,” Adam “recognizes heaven as the plane on which his sense of selfhood depends” (Rushdy 92). “The sense of humility and dependence which follows Adam's discovery marks his first cognition of an inner nature” (Fields 396). However, Adam's self-knowledge is not limited to his ontological nature. Julia M. Walker notes that in his awakening Adam already displays a knowledge of gender: “'Tell me', he asks the sun, 'how may I know him'. Adam 'knows' that God is male, but this is a knowledge that allows no alternative, a knowledge of an exclusively male universe” (172).

So far Adam has already attained the knowledge of order, of creation, of self, and of gender, all of which are confirmed by the “shape Divine” who appears in Adam's dream. In this dream Adam makes two right choices. First, he chooses to stay within his own sphere. At the beginning he is brought by the “shape Divine” to the summit of a “woodie Mountain,” where he can overlook the earth (PL VIII. 303). The site is purposefully chosen because it is the place nearest heaven, where Adam would mostly likely aspire to overlook the world like God. But Adam humbles himself before God, submitting to the latter “with aw” and “In adoration” (PL VIII. 314-15). Second, Adam chooses to obey God rather than his own desire. On the mountain top he sees the tree of knowledge. The “fairest Fruit that hung to the Eye” looks so “Tempting” that Adam struggles with a “sudden appetite / To pluck and eate” (PL VIII. 307-09). But as soon as God announces the prohibition, he chooses not to eat, even though he acknowledges that God's words sound “dreadful” in his ear.
The account of Adam's awakening and his dream is revealing about Adam's personality. He demonstrates that he is the active observer, the knowing subject, the self-restrained person, and God's loyal believer. These attributes constitute his masculinity and are amplified later in his fall. In contrast, Eve's account of her awakening and her dream demonstrates the opposite of all these characteristics.

At the outset of book V, Eve recalls her earliest memory:

That day I oft remember, when from sleep
I first awak't, and found my self repos'd
Under a shade on flowers, much wondering where
And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.
Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound
Of waters issu'd from a Cave and spread
Into a liquid Plain, then stood unmov'd
Pure as th' expanse of Heav'n; I thither went
With unexperienc't thought, and laid me downe
On the green bank, to look into the cleer
Smooth lake, that to me seemed another Skie.
As I bent down to look, just opposite,
A Shape within the wat'ry gleam appeered
Bending to look on me, I started back,
It started back, but please I soon returned
Pleas'd it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathie and love; there I had fixt
Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire. (PL IV. 449-66)

In this passage Eve shows an interest in her surroundings, but her exploration of the Edenic garden is limited. Instead of surveying the whole landscape, she only goes to investigate the lake because she is intrigued by “murmuring sound / Of waters issu'd from a Cave.” Thus, compared to Adam's self-guided exploration, Eve's wandering is purposeless and undirected.

Eve's vision of the world is different, too. In her eyes “the clear / Smooth Lake” is “another Skie.” She has no idea that the lake is merely the residue of the primitive waters repressed by the Holy Spirit during creation. With “unexperienc't thought,” she thinks that the “liquid plain” is as “Pure as th' expanse of Heaven.” Of the two skies, she is more interested in the one beneath, for the real sky is high above, but the liquid sky is right at her foot. The real sky has nothing attracting, but the liquid sky appeals to her with the “Shape within the wat'ry gleam.”

When she sees her reflection in the water, Eve does not recognize herself, nor does she know that the image is a woman. In her account of the image, not a single adjective associated with femininity is employed. It is only after Eve sees the masculine Adam that she finds her own image “fair,” “winning soft,” and “amiably mild” (PL IV. 478-79). At the lake, Eve simply uses a neutral “it” to designate her image, indicating a lack of gender awareness. In the image Eve finds “answering looks / Of sympathie and love,” so she pines for it. But her narcissistic fancy is interrupted by God's voice, who tells her:

What there thou seest fair Creature is thy self,
With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
And I will bring thee where no shadow staies
Thy coming, and thy soft imbrace, hee
Whose image thou art, him thou shall enjoy

Inseparable thine [...] (468-73)

God's voice constitutes Eve. It instills in the human mother a sense of selfhood by equating her with the image in the lake and reminding her at the same time that she is the image of a “hee.” From this perspective, a major difference between the first couple's respective awakenings becomes clear. Adam's awakening is about self-constitution whereas Eve's is about interpellation. Adam is already a subject before he is united with God; his subject constitution is the process of revealing “the imago dei” within him (Danielson, “Filial Freedom” 670). Eve is not a subject until God leads her away from the lake; her subject constitution is the process of internalizing the image of Adam after deserting her own image at the lake.

God appears to Adam and Eve during their awakenings in different ways. Adam sees the shape of God; Eve hears the voice of God. But God appears only in Adam's dream, while Satan replaces God in Eve's dream. Adam calls God to his dream, but Satan comes to Eve's dream without invitation. At the end of Book IV we learn that the dream is provoked by the Devil:

[Satan] Squat like a Toad, close at the eare of Eve;
Assaying by his Devilish art to reach
The Organs of her Fancie, and with them forge
Illusions as he list, Phantasms and Dreams,
Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint
Th' animal Spirits that from pure blood arise. (IV. 800-06)

In this fabricated dream Satan paints a different picture of the universe:
[...] now reigns
Full orbed the moon, and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain,
[...] Heav'n wakes with all his eyes. (PL V. 41-44)

In this passage the moon has the “more pleasing light.” But we know that the moon reflects the Sun, which, according to Adam, is the real “fair” and “happy” light. It is Satan who makes the moon look more pleasing, just as he also turns the tree of knowledge “Much fairer” to Eve's fancy “than by day” (PL V. 53). In addition, the imagery of stars as “eyes,” as Alastair Fowler suggests, is sometimes the sign of clandestine love, but in paradise only conjugal love is blessed by Milton's God. Thus, the vision Satan conveys to Eve here is heretic.

Two distinctive features of Eve's memory of the dream can be contrasted with Adam's two right choices. First, Eve disobeys God in her dream. When Satan offers the apple, she does not resist:

So saying, he [Satan] drew nigh, and to me held,
Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part
Which he had plucked; the pleasant savourie smell
So quick'nd appetite, that I, methought,
Could not but taste. (PL V. 82-86)

And most importantly, she does not reason before biting on the apple. The allure of the fruit, which arouses her appetite, instantly drives her into disobedience. That said, her rational

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9 cp. Catullus vii 7f (aut quam sidera multa, cum tacet nox, / furtivos hominum vident amores).
mind yields to desire. Secondly, Eve is created as an earthly being, but during her aerial flight with Satan, Eve leaves her own sphere. When she “beheld / The Earth outstretched immense” with “a prospect wide / And various,” she marvels at her flight and change “To this high exaltation” (PL.V. 86-90). The word “exaltation” is a pun. Often it indicates an extreme feeling of happiness. But derived from the Latin verb *exaltare*, which literally means “to raise aloft,” here it indicates an elevation in rank and power (OED 2a). The flight is about aspiring to “view all things at one view” like God (MacCaffrey 61). It harbors the ambition that will later lead Eve to disobedience.

In the scenes of her awakening and the dream, Eve demonstrates that she is the passive follower, the inexperienced subject, the uncontrolled self, and the wavering believer. These attributes, in contrast to those of Adam, constitute Eve's fallibility. Because she is passive, she is drawn to the lake, which in Adam's words, is the “liquid Lapse.” With “inexperienc't thought” she does not gain knowledge to the level that would be considered appropriate by Milton's God. She misunderstands the universal order, misrecognizes herself, and even falls into the narcissistic love of her own image. Her rational mind has less control over the lower faculties, allowing desire to take over. And finally, she does not firmly adhere to one belief. She changes her mind all the time, depending on the character she is with at a particular moment. So in the dream she does not display any worry or sense of guilt during the aerial flight. The shadow of the impending fall creeps into the lake and the dream. All Eve's fallible personalities become the reasons for her disobedience in book IX. For this reason, Adam's fallibility is positive, while Eve's is negative. They are not positive or negative in their own senses; the positivity or negativity is added by the fall. These fallibilities constitute gender identities. The positive fallibility is masculinity, whereas the
negative fallibility is femininity. This difference is congruent with the narrator's differentiation of gender, which is based on a positive fall and a negative fall.

However, Eve's account weighs more than her husband's because Milton's Adam, from the very first minute of his life, aligns himself with his God, and by extension, with the ideology that Milton's God embodies, so Adam's point of view jibes with the narrator of *Paradise Lost*, who appoints himself as the spokesperson of God. On the contrary, there is a process for Eve to internalize this ideology. There are moments when she is isolated from God and Adam. Her nascent life, for example, as Christine Froula asserts in “When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy,” is “innocent of patriarchal indoctrination, one whose resonances the covering trope of narcissism does not entirely suffice to control” (327). And in the dream she wanders into a wonderland where heresy replaces Christianity. For this reason, Eve's account of herself, which recommends a notion of femininity, has the potential to either justify or undermine the narrator's gender differentiation. It seems that the credibility of the narrator, as well as the credibility of the ideology that the narrator speaks for, is contingent on the first woman's articulation. This may sound ironic because in ancient times woman was forbidden to speak in church, as Paul admonishes, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (Tim. 2: 11-12). However, we cannot forget that the Christian faith, arguably contingent on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is testified to by some anonymous women on a Sunday morning two thousand years ago. At that time, these women were even not allowed to testify in court (Keener 698). 10

10 According to Keener, “Most of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries held little esteem for the testimony of
Fortunately, as this chapter demonstrates, Eve's account only affirms what the narrator preaches. But this may be strategic too, for the best way to sell an idea is to let it be validated by a seemingly uninterested party. In this sense, we may say that the patriarchal ideology actually utilizes woman's articulation to stabilize itself.

women; this reflects a broader Mediterranean limited trust of women's speech and testimony also enshrined in Roman law “(698-99).
CONCLUSION. PARADISE LOST IN A TIME OF TRANSITION

A common way of speaking about literature and history is just that way: literature and history, text and context. In these binary oppositions, if one term is stable and transparent and the other in some way mirrors it, then the other term can be stabilized and clarified too.


In chapter II and chapter III I argue that Sin's characterization is based on the Galenic-Aristotelian notion of woman, and Eve's characterization is based on the Hebraic-Christian notion of woman. In this chapter I would like to further suggest that these two notions of woman are dominated by two discourses, each of which takes a different approach to explain what constitutes gender identity. The discourse of physiology, which underpins the Galenic-Aristotelian tradition, constructs gender identity on a set of physiological traits. In this discourse the definition of gender is contingent on a (pseudo-) scientific study of the human body. This is why Sin's account of her metamorphosis/childbirth depicts the female anatomy in detail. The female monster's womb, vagina (entrails), and genitals (nether shape) are all exposed to the reader. In contrast, the discourse of proto-psychology, which underpins the Hebraic-Christian tradition, solicits gender identity from the subject's emotions and behaviors. The definition of gender in this discourse relies primarily on the analysis of the subject's conscious and subconscious motivations. This is why Eve's account of her awakening and dream reveals in detail her psychological interiority. How she views the world and herself is unreservedly shown to the reader.

I borrow this term from Michel Foucault's work. In Foucauldian terminology, discourse refers to systems of statements and texts which define the conditions of possibility for an object of study, and which form a kind of official language. For example, psychiatry is an official language, or discourse, in the sense that it consists of a network of texts, statements, relationships and authorities, all of which work together to form the system of psychiatric practice and study, from John Brannigan (New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 54.
Milton's *Paradise Lost* provides a site for the two discourses to contest. In the process of defining male identity, proto-psychology has already replaced physiology, so none of the male characters’ bodies is examined anatomically before the reader's eyes. Masculinity is no longer contingent on bodily properties, as it even transcends the considerable difference between Satan's and Adam’s bodies, which is no lesser than the difference between Eve's and Adam’s bodies. Both Satan and Adam are considered male simply because they demonstrate the same array of personalities in their fall: valor, determination, clear-headedness, constancy, and self-control. Thus, sex, biological and distinct, gives way to mentality, which is generalized and invisible.

In the process of defining female identity, however, proto-psychology has not completely established itself as the official language. Sin’s body is the last stronghold of the discourse of physiology, but there is no sign that it will soon be replaced by proto-psychology. The discourse of proto-psychology has marginalized its rival by claiming to the (Christian) truth, but as I demonstrated in chapter II, the discourse of physiology, feeding on the social reality of childbirth in Renaissance England, can still occasionally break the censorship and make itself noticed.

The contesting discourses affect text and context simultaneously. Written during the inception of Foucault's classical period, Milton’s *Paradise Lost* faithfully presents the emergence of a new discourse, which derives power from the Christian authority. However, this epistemological discontinuity has done little to change the patriarchal structure, which assigns women and men into designated social positions; it actually facilitates the

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12 Foucault divides history into three periods. The classical period is from 1660 to the end of the 19th century. This period sees the birth many of the characteristic institutions and structures of the modern world.
exploitation of women. To elaborate this point, I argue that both the old discourse and the new discourse appropriate power from women, but the latter is more soothing and less provocative.

First, the old discourse dehumanizes and demonizes woman, whereas the new discourse praises and elevates woman. Aristotle writes that woman is an incomplete male and nature’s defect. His theory sheds some light on the question of why Sin does not have real substance and why she is shaped into a monster. In contrast, the new discourse, as the quotations in the introduction show, recognizes woman's perfection in her own sex. This is why Eve is portrayed as “Heav'n's last best gift” (PL V. 19). Because it elevates woman's status to man's spiritual equal, the new discourse would meet less resistance from women than its predecessor does.

Second, the old discourse defines woman as the unassimilable other, whereas the new discourse defines woman as the educable other. From the first minute of her life, Sin is distanced by others. When she springs out of Satan's head, “amazement seins'd / All th' Host of Heav'n; back they recoild affraid / At first” (PL II. 758-60). Later, she is cast into the universal “Deep.” But occupying a liminal position at the gate of hell, Sin is excluded from both Heaven and Pandemonium. In contrast, made to please Adam, Eve is born into the care of men. The prisonlike patriarchal system in the paradise resembles the Foucauldian “carceral network,” which is “unwilling to waste even what it has decided to disqualify” (Foucault 1642). She is continuously tutored by God, Adam, Raphael, Christ, and Michael. Even after she falls, Eve is not deserted by her spiritual reformers.

Third, the old discourse sets an example of punishment to deter woman from entering the public sphere, whereas the new discourse uses promises of redemption to exhort woman
to stay in the domestic sphere. Holding the key to a public gateway, Sin is appointed to a task that no Renaissance woman would be allowed to take. But as soon as Sin assumes office, her body starts to mutate. The unbearable suffering that Sin experiences makes the scene of her metamorphosis a public spectacle. The torture, which invokes “conscious terrors,” is infinitely extended to daunt the female reader who seeks to enter the public sphere. In contrast, after Eve falls, the punishment for her is less violent. God's messenger spends more time preaching the benefits of submission. The angel Michael orders Eve: “Thy Husband, him to follow thou art bound; / Where he abides, think there thy native soile” (PL XI. 291-92); but he promises that if she obeys Adam, she will be redeemed on Judgment Day. To make his point clear, he even presents it visually in a dream so that Eve learns that through her “the Promis'd Seed shall all restore” (PL XII. 623). Therefore, moral judgment about what is good and what is bad substitutes for public torture as the chief means to curb woman's ambition.

The epistemological emergence of the new discourse has a dual impact on Renaissance women. On the one hand, it creates a better image of the female. On the other hand, it entails tighter and more sophisticated control of the female. This dual impact gives us a new perspective on the deadlocked debate of feminist criticism on Milton's representation of woman, for it explains why both Milton's defenders and Milton's accusers are right about certain things (see pp. 10-13). However, the same mistake of both parties is that critics used what they had rightly interpreted to reconstruct a Miltonic idea of woman, but they have overlooked the sexual politics of the Renaissance culture, which also participates in the production of Paradise Lost. Moreover, the interrogation of Milton's attitudes toward women diverts our attention from the culture's sexual politics; thus, it offers
us little to understand how masculinist ideology influences writing, which is one of the main objectives for feminist criticism. As I mentioned in chapter I, the feminist criticism of Milton in the past three decades tends to mutate into an ethical criticism.

Feminist criticism, as Judith Fetterley puts it, is "a political act whose aim is not simply to interpret the world but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read" (viii). However, feminism can only maintain a relevant and valid role in Milton studies as long as it is undertaken alongside other textual and historical approaches (Bradford 172), as Ferguson Nyquist asserts:

Yet if the various discourses that have, historically, sought mastery over the text were themselves to be placed in intertextual relation with it, and in conflictual relation with any feminist counterreadings, [...] then *Paradise Lost* as a text whose meaning is somehow pre-given or authoritatively present would be lost to history by being given up to it. Intervening in that history, a feminist reading of the text we have been looking at would refuse to stabilise or recuperate it, thereby approaching *Paradise Lost* by happily letting it go.

(182)

In this thesis I attempt to demonstrate how masculinist ideologies enter Milton's *Paradise Lost* and manifest themselves through a multiplicity of voices. My reading is historicized instead of politicized. But given the fact that it is meant to redress the biased sexual politics that have dominated literature as well as the world we live in, I still consider my thesis a piece of feminist criticism of Milton, for after all, the end justifies the means.
WORKS CITED


McColgan, Kristin Pruitt. “Abundant Gifts: Hierarchy and Reciprocity in *Paradise Lost*.” 


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