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Milton's Satan: A realization of the feminine
"Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?"

by

Cheryl Ann Marsh

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"The Devil, my friend, is a woman just now,  
'Tis a woman that reigns in Hell."

Owen Meredith

"Dieu s'est fait homme; soit. Le Diable  
s'est fait femme."

Victor Hugo
As twentieth century readers we often view masculine and feminine characters from a biological or psychological perspective. However, when reading literature of an earlier period, particularly the middle ages through the seventeenth century, we discover that the masculine and feminine were considered on a third level—the philosophical. If we ignore this third view we are limited in our interpretations of a character's nature and behavior. D. W. Robertson recognizes this difficulty in his discussion of the Wife of Bath. He describes the wife as being in some ways typically "feminine" but emphasizes that the "femininity she represents was in Chaucer's day a philosophical rather than a psychological concept."¹ If we restrict ourselves to a biological or psychological meaning for the masculine and feminine qualities in comparing Milton's Satan and Eve, we appear to engage in a futile exercise. However, the feminine considered in philosophic terms becomes, I believe, an essential part of the nature and behavior of Eve and Satan in "Paradise Lost" and is, in fact, a basis for the dramatic realization of Satan within the poem. The philosophical concept of the feminine is a multifaceted idea developing from both the secular and sacred writings.

Christian theology was the primary source for a definition of the philosophical concept of the feminine. Woman became a convenient symbol for evil, carnality and passion. Although in traditional theology these particular vices are essential aspects of the feminine, they develop out of the very nature and limitations of what may be termed "feminine reason." Scholars apply various labels to describe the quality of reason traditionally attributed to the feminine. Hoopes, labeling this quality
"reason" as opposed to "right reason," notes that "reason" is guided by curiosity and enthusiasm—a "vice that diverts men's energies and attentions from the primary concern of life and living."2 "Right reason," however, relies upon the "fusion of—and not the choice between—reason and faith, of the works of man in alliance with the grace of God."3 There are two kinds of knowledge for Milton. One, which guides the actions of both Christ and Adam, is the result of "intuition" or "intuitive reasoning" or the "intimate impulse." The second is the result of "discursive reason"—knowledge which depends upon inference. Milton would argue that "intuitive reason" is the more steady and reliable monitor.4 Discursive knowledge fails as a guide for man as it does, indeed, fail Satan and Eve. Recognizing this same failure, Stanley Fish discusses a similar view. He opposes "carnal reason," which intrudes into the area of "the mysteries of divinity and faith," to the superior faculty of "reason."5 His discussion associates "carnal reason" with Eve.

Regardless of the terminology applied, scholars conclude that during the period from the middle ages through the Renaissance one type of reason (usually labeled "right reason") was considered a higher faculty than "reason." For the purposes of this paper the lower faculty will be described as "degenerative" for it leads one to look away from God to oneself. A human guided by degenerative reason infers knowledge about himself and his universe frequently in disregard of the power and good of God. The higher reason, termed "regenerative," refers existence and experience to God.
At least as early as the thirteenth century this quality labeled "degenerative" reason was associated with the feminine and was opposed to "regenerative" reason associated with the masculine. The medieval sermon literature incorporates this belief to emphasize that woman (and hence the feminine) is inferior by nature of her reason. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: "For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates." Joseph Duncan notes that the rule of reason was basic in defining the relationship of husband to wife and ruler to people. The principal guideline was St. Paul's statement: "For the Husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. . . . Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything." (Coloss. 3.18, Eph. 5.24) In the "Tetrachordon" Milton bases his belief that the male's reason is superior on St. Paul's comment. Milton argues that the male is superior because he was created in God's image. The female is inferior because she was created in reference to the male. Citing St. Paul's comment from I. Cor. 11 that "The head of the woman is the man: he the image and glory of God, she the glory of the man," Milton notes that the male is not for the female, but "she for him." Those ideas are repeated in "Paradise Lost." (IV. 299)

Because the wife was weaker and inferior by nature, her husband supplied the needed guidance and direction. In a medieval sermon on the state of matrimony the writer cautions: "... the woman is a weak
creature, not endued with like strength and constancy of mind; therefore they be sooner disquieted, and they be the more prone to all weak affections and dispositions of mind, more than men be."9

Derrick Bailey summarizes many of the arguments used in the sermon literature of the 17th century:

The basic principle of sexual relationship is that of male headship; men in general are credited with superior understanding and a prerogative of reason and government, while women are alleged to be so constituted as to require guidance, control, and protection.10

Thus, the religious thinking of the period suggests that an inferior nature, specifically an inferior reasoning ability, is a particular trait of the female, and of the feminine by implication.

Secular literature of the period emphasizes that this same correlation was an accepted idea. The belief is expressed so frequently in the literature that it seems to require little explanation. Literature often ties the question of feminine reason with the nature of "feminine" (effeminate) sensuality. When an artist wishes to demonstrate the failure of reason he often employs a female character or an "effeminate" male. Robertson suggests this association in the tale of Theseus in the "Canterbury Tales." Chaucer wrote: "What with his wysdom and his chivalrie, he conquered all the regne of Femenye..." Robertson notes that "Wisdom is traditionally 'married' to the sensuality when a proper relationship between the two is maintained. The 'marriage' suggested here [in the Knight's Tale] is suggested once more at the end of the tale, for the marriage of Palamon and Emelye establishes Thebes, the
city of Venus and Bacchus, in a position of 'obeisance' to Athens, the city of Minerva.11 Robertson cites Nicolas de Goran's comment that "Mystically, the wife is the inferior part of the reason."12

Milton links inferior reason with the feminine in "Paradise Lost:"

"From man's effeminate slackness it begins,"
Said th' Angel, "who should better hold his place
By wisdom, and superior gifts received."

XI. 634-636

Thus, the idea that feminine reason is inferior by nature originated in Christian commentary and found expression in the literature. Degenerative reason is used in both secular and sacred literature as the basic distinguishing quality of the feminine. Two principles—the masculine and the feminine—operate within the universe. Connection of the degenerative reason with the feminine implies the existence of the masculine, regenerative reason. The relationship of the superior masculine regenerative reason to the feminine degenerative reason may be termed as the "one" to the "other," the creator to the creature.

Rapport d'Urie terms the relationship of the feminine to the masculine as "otherness." "Woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man. . . . She is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, the Absolute—she the Other."13

Simone de Beauvoir explores the concept further:

In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality—that of the Self and the Other. . . . Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought. Thus it is that no group ever sets itself up as the one without at once setting up the Other against itself.14
Northrop Frye elaborates this quality in his discussion of the relationship of Milton's Adam and Eve:

The relationship of man to woman symbolizes, or dramatizes the relation of the creator to creature. God speaks of himself as male and his revelation uses the terms Father and Son, although in most contexts, apart from the incarnation, we can hardly ascribe literal sex to the Deity. We think of God as male primarily because he is the creator: we think of nature as female, not merely as the mother from whose body we are born, but as a creature of God. Human souls, including male souls, are symbolically female when thought of as creatures. . . . Among spirits whether fallen or unfallen, sex is not functional: spirits can be of what sex they please. But in human life the sexes represent the polarizing of man's existence between God and nature, creator and creature.15

Frye's comment emphasizes two important concepts. One is the relationship symbolized by male and female. The other is the masculine and feminine may be regarded as something more than biologically distinguishing terms—they may be considered on a philosophical level.

In this inferior state as the "other" and as a result of her degenerative reason which looks to self instead of to God, the feminine develops certain other qualities—all undesirable and all in direct opposition to the more desirable masculine qualities. The feminine is prideful, envious of the superior masculine position and hence, evil.

According to Eileen Power, woman became in the middle ages the supreme temptress, "'Ianna diaboli,' the most dangerous of all obstacles in the way of salvation."16 The sermon literature of the period contains numerous examples of women who embody the traits of evil and carnality. G. R. Owst provides many instances of this connection in his
works. Typical is Vincent de Beauvais' indictment of the feminine in the following: "Woman is the confusion of man, an insatiable beast, a continuous anxiety, an incessant warfare, a daily ruin, a house of tempest, a hindrance to devotion."17

This concept of the feminine, expressed through the sermon literature, found confirmation in the writings of the Christian fathers and biblical interpreters. Tertullian wrote: "Woman, you are the devil's doorway. You have led astray one whom the devil would not dare attack directly. It is your fault that the son of God had to die; you should always go in mourning and in rags." St. Ambrose: "Adam was led to sin by Eve and not Eve by Adam. It is just and right that woman accept as lord and master him whom she has led to sin." St. John Chrysostom: "Among all savage beasts none is found so harmful as woman."18 St. Jerome: "Woman is the true Satan, the foe of peace, the source of impatience, the subject of dissension, whose absence brings assured tranquility."19

In the middle ages typical depictions of woman usually followed either of two models. They were either of good women created in the image of Mary and devoted to their religion or of evil women fashioned after Eve and devoted adherents of the devil. Ovst discusses this dichotomous portrayal and concludes that despite the two sources for feminine portrayal most writers through the 16th century modeled their women after Eve.20

Secular literature again reinforces this link of the feminine with evil. Frequently woman represents flesh, carnality, and lust. Robert-
son comments that the writers "condemn women, not because there is anything intrinsically evil about women, but because woman may be easily regarded as a source of fleshly rather than spiritual satisfaction." Thus, the belief in feminine evil becomes a philosophical concept and woman, a philosophical symbol. In the "Canterbury Tales" some women are antitypes of Mary; others, antitypes of Eve. In developing the "evil" woman type Chaucer frequently uses lust and carnality as their principal sins and lust becomes the primary means of leading men away from the virtuous path. Frequently lust is labeled effeminate. A similar point is made in the "Roman de la Rose." Robertson writes: "Jean's attitude toward woman is simply a traditional manner of expressing the evils of 'effeminacy' or lack of virtue." Andreas Cappelanus suggests the same connection between woman and evil in the Art of Courtly Love.

The literature of the Renaissance continues this tradition. Frequently, the Ovidian narratives portray woman as nothing more than a figure of lust. In "Venus and Adonis" and "Ovid's Banquet of Sense" the woman is an entirely sensual character. In the pastorals the shepherds (antitypes of Adam) are frequently tempted by women. The shepherds are always men of high virtue and the fleshly temptation by woman is the means through which they are overwhelmed by the "effeminate" (feminine) quality of sensuality.

These qualities of the feminine—degenerative reasoning, pride, envy and hence evil—originated in the thinking of the Christian fathers and found confirmation in the writers of secular literature. The philosophic concept of the feminine was so much a part of the pattern of
religious thought that it required no explanation. It was expressed throughout sermon literature and secular literature and the meaning was clearly understood. For Christian writers woman, and Eve by implication, was the symbol of the philosophic concept of the feminine.

Milton's depiction of Eve in "Paradise Lost" emphasizes the traits which are intrinsically tied to this concept. His view of Eve is influenced by the traditional Christian attitude toward the place, function and nature of woman. This is, perhaps, obvious, but less obvious is the idea that these same characteristics are evident in the Satan of "Paradise Lost" and are, in fact, the elements which enabled Milton to create a realized presence of evil within the epic.

This belief implies that a similarity exists between the nature and behavior of Eve and Satan. While many of the critics in separate discussions of Satan and Eve ascribe similar traits to the pair, none appear to find parallels between the two. Rather the scholarly work on Satan generally treats him in one or both of the following patterns: as a character within the boundaries of the poem with the usual sort of character analysis or as a Christian concept.

Some discussions which deal with finding similarities between Satan and Messiah and Adam and Eve extend the comparisons to include comments on Christian doctrine. Typical of this treatment is E. M. W. Tillyard's view that Satan and Christ "in some sort represent passion and reason." Denis Saurat extends the comparison writing that the duality of Christ and Satan is one of reason and passion and also good and evil
proving that latent evil may exist in the Infinite. Others see Adam and Eve as earthly reflections of Christ and Satan. For example, John Steadman terms Satan and Christ as "spiritual archetypes of the human hero." For others there exists a celestial duality of being which is reflected in Adam and Eve. Citing lines 383-386 of Book VIII, Roland Mushat Frye concludes that Eve is brought to Adam and from Adam, "symbolizing at once the separate individuality of human persons and their inescapable corporate mutuality." Arnold Stein elaborates this idea noting that Eve is "in Milton's comment on Genesis, God's gift of 'another self, a second self, a very self itself.'" The concept of duality is reinforced in the discussions of Fredson Bowers, John Halkett, and Balachandra Rajan, who hold that Eve and Adam must be considered together if one is to have a complete picture of Man. While most scholars find parallels between Adam and Messiah none extend the comparison to include Satan and Eve. Burton Weber, in criticizing some of the scholarship in this area, writes that although there is "virtue in uniting macrocosmic action with microcosmic psychology" these views fail to adequately explain the characters of Satan and Eve.

Other scholars concentrate their work in character analysis. William Grace, Northrop Frye, and Arnold Stein discuss the motivations—pride and envy—for Satan's fall. While they also find similar motivations for the fall of Eve their works ignore the obvious parallels between the two.

Another area of similarity between the pair is the nature of their reason. Critics such as Arnold Williams, William Grace, Roland Mushat
Frye, Arnold Stein, and Burton Weber find the actions of Satan and Eve frequently governed by their deficient reason. Again, these critics tend to separate the two in discussions and ignore possible similarities in behavior.

Roland Mushat Frye and Rajan treat Satan as a symbol and source of evil within the Christian context. Their discussions ignore the connections of the feminine (principally Eve) with the concept of evil.

Thus the scholarship emphasizes that there are parallels between the relationship of Adam to Eve and Christ to Satan. However, while scholars are willing to concede that parallels exist between Christ and Adam they tend to ignore similar parallels in the nature of Eve and Satan.

The scholarly work fails to discuss the Christian concept of evil manifested in the feminine as a possible source for Milton's creation of Satan's realized presence in the work. Few would argue against the strength of the portrayal. Most would agree with Basil Willey that "God as an epic personage was less real than Satan." At the outset of this discussion it is important to understand that the portrayal of absolutes good and evil embodied in God and Satan is a difficult task. Frequently, literary works only portray good and evil traits, and the results are characters such as Good Deeds, Charity, Gluttony, and Greed which become real because they are dramatically treated as human. When the artist wishes to realize God and Satan as dramatic characters, he must turn a concept into a human and believable character, and, as human actors in a literary work, they become less than absolute. Because of
this inherent problem, God and Satan appear infrequently as the principal characters in a work. Instead, we understand good and evil only as God and Satan work through human characters. Just as the Red Cross Knight and Sir Gawain are believable as they strive for Christ-like perfection because they are capable of human failings, so, too, is the evil of Satan realized in the bedevilment of sinners by characters like Chaucer's Pardoner and Summoner. These characters are believable because they are human, but they are not absolutes. Most often, characters which are truly absolute, like Spenser's Arthur, exist in the background of literary works where their dramatic portrayal is unquestioned. As an absolute, Spenser's Artegall is not as real, for instance, as the more human Red Cross Knight. Likewise, Sir Gawain is realized more fully than the poet's Pearl, and Chaucer's Wife of Bath is more believable as a dramatic character than his Constance. Despite the difficulties, however, Milton attempted to create realized presences in God and Satan. In the portrayal of Satan, he succeeded.

Scripture, the writer's usual source for the portrayal of Old and New Testament characters, provided little material for the depiction of Satan as a dramatic character. In The Common Expositor Arnold Williams concedes that the scriptural material is sparse and the commentaries are only elaborations on the motivations for his fall. The commentaries offer four closely related versions of Satan's fall, but the Miltonic account follows a version espoused by Zanchius, whose explanation includes both pride and envy resulting from the angel's refusal to accept God's partial explanation of the mystery of the incarnation. In
"Paradise Lost" Satan revolted when God "begot" his son and made him vicegerent of heaven. Thus, the commentaries provide only two character traits for Satan—pride and envy.

It would appear that the reality of the Satan of "Paradise Lost" was entirely the result of Milton’s creative imagination—an exciting thought, perhaps, but an unsatisfactory answer. No artist is entirely removed from the influences of his culture, his religious heritage and other writers. There are numerous influences and their discovery provides insight into the character.

A comparison of the nature and behavior of Satan and Eve uncovers certain parallels and similarities. These character attributes are those precisely elaborated in the discussion of the philosophical concept of the feminine. This study will suggest that given the lack of material for a dramatically realized character portrayal of Satan, Milton turned to a concept familiar to his readers. This idea, the philosophic concept of the feminine, symbolically demonstrated to the readers the results and sins of a life dedicated to self rather than to God. By portraying Satan in these terms Milton was able to resolve the difficulties of creating an absolute as a human character in a dramatic work.

Basic to my thesis is the belief that two philosophic forces—the masculine and feminine—operate within Milton’s universe. Although a part of many Eastern religions, this duality is not basic to modern Christian thought. The previous discussion of the feminine emphasizes that early Christians incorporated this concept. A reading of the poem
which does not consider this concept ignores important aspects of the work. The masculine and feminine develop certain qualities and patterns of behavior which are in opposition to each other. The feminine exhibits degenerative reason which permits actions guided by pride and envy, while the masculine regenerative reason recognizes its proper place in the universe. The previous discussion emphasizes that these ideas were basic to Christian thought and were illustrated in the secular literature. The most distinguishing feature is the quality of reason. Because the feminine principle is guided by an inferior, degenerative reason which refers existence and experience to self, other qualities develop which distinguish the feminine from the masculine. First the feminine is characterized by pride and envy. Envy leads the feminine to consider only self and pride allows her to assert a position superior to the masculine (the one). If the feminine reason were not in some way inferior, thoughts of this sort would never enter the mind. The masculine, on the other hand, represents a philosophic humility, which makes assertions of superiority to God impossible. In Adam's fall, for example, the question of attaining a God-like state is never entertained and, in fact, when Adam submits to Eve's desires his action is designated as feminine. Second, the feminine is characterized by a capacity for deception. Eve and Satan deceive themselves into thinking God-head is attainable. Adam is "not deceav'd/ But fondly overcome with Femal charm." (IX. 998-999) Along with this quality is the desire of the feminine to deceive others. The masculine accepts the consequences of his acts and desires that they die with him. The feminine wants to take
someone else along.

Although the masculine and feminine natures are most frequently in a state of conflict it is possible to imagine a time, the innocent state of Paradise, when such discord did not exist. In creating his picture of Paradise, Milton suggests the harmony that once existed between the two natures. He portrays this quite graphically through his use of the metaphor of the hands. When Adam and Eve enter the blissful Bower they do so "hand in hand". (IV. 689) Milton emphasizes that they work harmoniously, each tending his own particular labors. There are no assertions of independence, no need for envy. The relationship seems to go much deeper than the mere sharing of labor and extends to a certain duality of nature itself. This separate, but mutual, quality is expressed in the following:

Among unequals what society
Can sort, what harmony or true delight?
Which must be mutual, in proportion due
Giv'n and receiv'd.

VIII. 383-386

Eve looks to Adam. She refers all questions to him; he is her source of knowledge. Adam is her point of reference from which she views her world and her relationship to God. Recognizing this union, Eve speaks to Adam:

"My Author and Disposer, what thou bidd'st
Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains,
God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise.

IV. 635-638

Thus, Adam and Eve, physically separate, are one philosophically—
a harmonious conjunction of the masculine and feminine. While they are
in harmony and accord with each other they are able to work together, each performing assigned tasks while recognizing the proper order of their relationship—Adam as the superior and guide for Eve's actions, the one to the other, the creator to the creature. In the prelapsarian state there were no apparent problems in the relationship. The order of this relationship is disturbed through Eve's self-love and perverted after her fall. The Fall, the breaking of harmony and hands illustrated when Eve "from her Husband's hand her hand/ Soft she withdrew," (IX. 385-386) results in a division of nature and an alienation and antagonism between the two. They no longer work together, but rather labor in competition. At this point the faults which exist in man are the results of what is most frequently termed his effeminate nature. "From man's effeminate slackness it begins." (XI. 663) The feminine becomes no longer the support of the masculine, but rather its enemy. (See X. 895-898, XI. 622-628, XI. 582-586)

As prelapsarian Eve (the feminine) complements Adam (the masculine), so, too, is Satan an essential part of the angels—Satan is the feminine element; Christ, the masculine. The relationship of Christ and Satan to each other is not as clearly defined as that of Adam to Eve, yet it is possible to infer much about the association from the poem. In Book I Satan's reflection on his fallen state implies that he held a high position in heaven. Satan once "Cloth'd wjth transcendent brightness didst outshine/ Myriads though bright." (I. 86-87)

Both Messiah and Satan once held high positions in the councils of heaven. Later, in Book V, Abdiel concedes that Satan occupied a "place
so high above thy Peers." (V. 812) Satan's words in Book I suggest that before his fall his relationship with Messiah and God was a happy, harmonious union. Satan considered God's elevation of Messiah unjust for: "Whom reason hath equall'd, force hath made supreme/ Above his equals." (I. 248-249) Satan argues that force, rather than merit, decided the issue. God's words contradict this view. Messiah is

By merit more than Birthright Son of God,
Found worthiest to be so by being Good,
Far more than great or High;
Because in thee Love hath abounded more than Glory abounds,
Therefore thy Humiliation shall exist
With thee thy Messiah's Manhood also to this throne.

III. 309-314

Messiah's elevation above Satan and the other angels resulted from his superior nature rather than his political maneuverings. God's words suggest that Messiah, whose wisdom is God's wisdom, possesses the qualities of the masculine regenerative (right) reason.

Messiah was chosen because of a superior nature—much in the same way as Adam is accorded a prominent position over Eve. Satan appears to represent a latent inferior nature similar to Eve's which asserts itself at the time of his fall. His rebellion creates discord in heaven and Satan becomes the adversary and must be driven out. (V. 887)

Adam's consolation to Eve that "Evil into the mind of God or Man/ May come and go. . ." (and does so in the form of Satan) implies that a duality of good and evil, masculine and feminine, exists even among the highest orders and implies also a duality of being itself represented in Messiah and Satan. When these two aspects of being work together, harmony follows. When Satan asserts his selfhood arguing that "...
Orders and Degrees/ Jar not with liberty," (V. 792-793) he disrupts the order and fails to recognize his proper place in the total scheme. When the feminine nature complements the masculine and maintains its subordinate position, order and harmony result. However, when the feminine (represented by Satan and Eve) view themselves as separate entities—an action resulting in chaos and sin—they must be punished. They both fail to see the order in the relationship of the one to the other, the creator to the creature. Their assertions of self-creation which are denials of their dependency on Adam and Christ (the "one") are manifestations of this failure to recognize a proper order. While both view this act as a quest for personal freedom, they both fail to realize what Balachandra Rajan points out in "The Web of Responsibility," that "freedom finds its nature in obedience to reason and in the creative rootedness in the order of things." They can be truly free only when they accept the superiority of regenerative reason symbolized by God, Messiah and Adam.

It is at this point—the time when masculine and feminine begin to operate in opposition to each other—that the limitations of degenerative reason and the characteristics of the philosophical concept of the feminine are apparent in the development of Satan and Eve. Before the fall of each, right reason controlled and directed the feminine, degenerative reason. Although the capacity for evil was present within the feminine, masculine guidance prevented its realization. However, when the feminine asserted its selfhood, harmony was no longer possible. Degenerative reason, after its initial assertion of independence, causes
the feminine nature to behave in certain ways. The following discusses
the qualities and the effects of degenerative reason on a feminine
nature acting independent of the masculine.

The limitations of degenerative reason exemplified in the charac-
ters of Satan and Eve manifest themselves in numerous incidents
throughout the work. Degenerative reason clouds the mind and prevents
a being from comprehending the order of the universe and the power that
is God. The limitations of Eve's reasoning are most evident in her
question to Adam about the stars: "Wherefore all night long shine
these: for whom/ This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?"
(IIV. 657-658) Weber comments:

Adam's reply suggests the nature of the limita-
tion. Adam explains the physical use of star-
light (IV. 660-673) then, answering Eve's second
question, he suggests that what is important
about the stars is that God be praised for his
works, not that man be delighted, and he stresses
man's humble status by noting that angels would
praise God even if man did not exist. (IV. 674-
680) Eve's first question, then, reveals her
tendency to be insufficiently logical (she fails
to see the analogy which Adam sees between the
function of the stars and those of the sun), and
her second question reveals a self-centeredness
caused by a failure to view questions in a broad
enough context. This limitation in reasoning is
Eve's chief limitation, for Adam answers her at
length. 32

Weber's discussion of Eve's limitations does not go far enough.
Eve seems to view the creation in relationship to the ability of the
world to delight—an example of the "effeminate" quality of the sensu-
ous in contrast with Adam's wiser view of the world. More important,
however, is that Eve views the creation in relation to self; Adam views
The creation as a means through which God can be praised—a distinction which separates degenerative from regenerative reason. Even before the Fall, Eve seems to demonstrate a propensity for degenerative reason. Satan's request to "look on me" (IX. 687) urges Eve to openly infer the truth about God from what she sees rather than from faith alone.33 Fish writes that in Book IX, lines 679-685 "Satan initiates Eve into the mysteries of empirical science."34 Hoopes further emphasizes the change: "Thus, Eve, when she chose to eat the fruit was persuaded by discursive logic of a systematic, compelling, yet, specious order. Her act could only bring disaster."35 Fish succinctly summarizes the argument in the following comment:

Believing in experience, in reason, in things seen, in the patterns (causes) the mind discerns (or creates) in nature, is believing in oneself, and urging that belief is the ultimate in flattery. 'Queen of the Universe' is a form of flattery easily resisted because it is so obvious, but as soon as Eve begins even to consider the prohibition as a subject for rational discourse, she accepts the same title with a slight variation: "Judge of the Universe."36

In seeing herself as judge Eve is attempting to assume a position which can only be accorded to God. The idea is more than a passing fancy to be dismissed when right reason prevails. Instead, for Eve, it becomes a belief that godhead is attainable. Degenerative reason allows her the heresy. Adam's reason does not permit this type of self-deception. He falls out of his love for Eve.

Satan's behavior displays similar limitations resulting from degenerative reason. In his first speech Satan exhibits his inability to
comprehend the magnitude of the force he is combating:

What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable will.
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield;
And what is also not to be overcome?

I. 105-109

Degenerative reason permits him to misunderstand the total power of the Infinite. Degenerative reason also prevents him from realizing the full consequences of his fall and from comprehending the total divine scheme. His cry to the other fallen angels, "Awake, arise, or be for'ever fall'n!" (I. 330) indicates a perseverance which ignores the reality (the Truth that is God).

His frequent shifts in logic demonstrate the failure of reason which is not referred ultimately to God. The desire for freedom and the dislike for the injustice of the tyranny of God—a major failure of the reasoning faculty to comprehend the divine scheme—are his reasons for revolution. Yet, in Book IV, lines 41-44 he reveals that he is uncertain of the correctness of his position.

Satan is also unable to understand that Messiah is much more than another angel elevated by a paternalistic whim of God. He views Messiah as a conspirator who was able to manipulate his way to a position of power:

"Thrones, Dominions, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers
If these magnific titles yet remain
Not merely titular, since by decree
Another now hath to himself engrossed
All power, and us eclipse under the name
Of king anointed."

V. 771-777
Satan, like Eve, is unable to understand why Messiah, like Adam, is accorded a superior position. Satan and Eve are both unable to accept their inferior status. Perhaps the greatest difficulty within the nature of Satan is his inability to see beyond the immediate and understand the long range results of the evil which he plans. He consistently relates the situation to himself and fails to see beyond the immediate, thus ignoring God's omnipotence. This behavior parallels Eve's. They both fail to see the necessity of order and the importance of a properly maintained relationship of the one to the other. These limitations characterize the feminine, which constantly refers experience to self.

These limitations of degenerative reason lead Eve and Satan to sinful acts. Milton's description of Eve hints at a latent state of evil within her. Eve's golden tresses are worn "dishevell'd" and "in wanton ringlets wav'd." (IV. 305-306) Milton compares her to Circe (IX. 522) and to Pandora

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whom the Gods
Endow'd with all their gifts, and O too like
In sad event, when to the unwiser Son
Of Japhet brought to Hermes, she ensnar'd
Mankind with her fair looks, to be aveng'd
On him who had stole Jove's authentic fire.
IV. 714-719
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Through her actions Eve brings death and chaos into Eden. The sensuality evident in the descriptions of Eve connects her with the traditional view of the feminine. As noted earlier commentators frequently linked sensuality with degenerative reason and the feminine.

Satan states his intentions in his proclamation "Evil, be thou my
good." (IV. 110) Unable to recreate another heaven he determines to become the arch fiend creating a hell and chaos to oppose the goodness of God. What he, of course, fails to understand is that good can, and indeed will, come out of evil. The evil Satan intends could result in only two outcomes: good to others and evil to himself. Milton expounded on this concept in the Christian Doctrine:

Nor does God make that will evil which was before good, but the will being already in a state of perversion, he influences it in such a manner that out of its own wickedness it either operates good for others, or punishment for itself, though unknowingly, and with the intent of producing a very different result.37

If the reasoning faculties of Satan and Eve were not in a degenerative state, thoughts of evil would not guide their actions for they would constantly view themselves in relation to God. The feminine link with evil and sin is precisely elaborated in the text of "Paradise Lost":

This mischief had not then befall'n
And more that shall befall, innumerable
Disturbances on earth through female snares,
And strait conjunction with this sex.

Michael prophesies to Adam of the future temptations to righteous men:

To these that sober race of men, whose lives
Religious titled them the Sons of God,
Shall yield up all their virtue, all their fame
Ignobly, to the trains and to the smiles
Of these fair atheists, and now swim in joy
(Erelong to swim at large) and laugh; for which
The world erelong a world of tears must weep.

X. 895-898
XI. 622-628
This quality is linked with the philosophical concept of the feminine in the following lines:

"From man's effeminate slackness it begins,
Said th' Angel, "who should better hold his place
By wisdom, and superior gifts received."

XI. 634-636

Importantly, the text links the two ideas and Michael's words also imply another direct outgrowth of the state of evil in the feminine and hence in Eve and Satan—the desire to tempt others. This desire results from envy of the superior masculine position embodied in Adam and Christ. The envy is a denial of the proper order of the universe reflected in the correct relationship of the one to the other, the creator to the creature.

After her fall, Eve's first thoughts are of Adam:

    but what if God have seen,
        And Death ensue? then I shall be no more,
        And Adam wedded to another Eve,

        I resolve,
        Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe.

IX. 826-831

Eve is unable to accept totally the consequences of her actions. Her thoughts of God are merely incidental. Envy of Adam has prompted her actions and envy of his unfallen state now prompts her to tempt him.

Satan's envy of Messiah's elevation has been discussed. This envy prompts his rebellion. Satan, like Eve, is unable to rebel alone. He persuades some of the other angels to rebel with him. Then, his envy of Adam and Eve and his desire to strike back at God prompt the temptation of Eve. (II. 357 ff. and IV. 358 ff.)
The feminine's sinfulness and envy force the deception and temptation of others. Ironically, even though Eve, Satan, and the feminine see themselves in inferior states and envy the masculine superiority, degenerative reason permits them to make assertions of pride—the greatest sin of all.

Eve's first narcissistic assertion bears some resemblance to Satan's when he rues his appearance after his fall. The comments of both emphasize their interest in their own physical appearances. This interest in self is revealed in her reaction to the reflection in the pool:

pleased I soon returned;
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love. There I had fixed
Mind eyes till now, and pined with vain desire.

IV. 463-466

Eve is vain about her beauty as Satan is about his physical strength. Eve's self-love will lead to misdirected obedience—a disobedience which turns from God to thoughts of self and Adam, which parallels Satan's disobedience in that his thoughts and loyalties turn downward from God to the other fallen angels. Satan desires to be a "faithful leader" and Gabriel replies: "Faithful to whom? To thy rebellious crew?" (IV. 952) Satan's loyalties no longer belong to God.

Eve's envy of Adam's superior position in the universe permits the temptation, and her pride allows the assent:

And render me more equal, and perhaps
A thing not undesirable, sometime
Superior; for inferior who is free.

IX. 816-818
Satan's pride, like Eve's, led to his assertions of freedom and equality with God. His envy of the position and power of Messiah led to his rebellion. Just as Eve is able to justify her tasting of the fruit and dismiss, at first, the warning that disobedience will result in death so, too, is Satan able to deceive himself into thinking his rebellion is justified and has chances of success. (I. 105-109)

Eve's pride is also the basis for what Stein terms her self-temptation. Stein concludes that the voice in Eve's dream is her own—"Assumed, projected, and heightened."38 Stein traces Eve's value of self throughout the epic. After her fall, she transfers her attention and worship to the tree:

But henceforth my early care
Not without song, each morning, and due praise,
Shall tend thee."

IX. 800-802

Stein argues that this is self-deception:

For her real value is self. Under the formal ritual of worshipping it she can freely exercise self-love. It is a return to the mirror state now not ignorant and innocent but approved and formally rationalized. As God is reflected in the universe, imitation godhead sees itself reflected in a natural object; in this sense nature, as in the dream, becomes a mirror of self.39

Satan's "obdurate pride" (I. 58) is pride in its most dangerous form for it, too, destroys the order of the universe. Because of his pride Satan asserts his own superiority over God, an action which destroys the order of the world. His pride is the source of his ambition which leads to his war against God. (I. 40-43) It is also a pride
which allows him to assert the equality of the fallen angels with God (V. 789-794), the correctness of self-rule (V. 864-869), and, finally, it is a pride which allows Satan to engage in the greatest heresy—a denial of his creation:

That we were formed then, say's thou? And the work Of secondary hands, by task transferred From Father to his Son? Strange point and new! Doctrine which we would know whence learnt: Who saw When this creation was? Remember'st thou Thy making, when the Maker gave thee being? We know no time when we were not as now Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised By our own quick'ning power, when fatal course Had circled his full orb, the birth mature Of this own native Heav'n, Ethereal sons.  
V. 853-863

The fatal consequences of his pride are enormous but unrecognized by Satan. C. S. Lewis comments:

What we see in Satan is the horrible coexistence of a subtle and incessant intellectual activity with an incapacity to understand anything. This doom he has brought upon himself, in order to avoid seeing one thing he has, almost voluntarily, incapacitated himself from seeing at all.40

Pride is usually considered the worst sin. It is a trait of character severely restricted in Adam and lacking in Messiah but seems to be the predominant aspect of being for Eve and Satan. The commentaries suggest the same motivations—pride and the resulting envy—for both Satan and Eve.

The memorable traits and despised characteristics of both Satan and Eve emerge from their personalities because of their inferior natures. They are inferior and thus more capable and more inclined toward sin because of degenerative reason. They, unlike Adam and
Chast, do not refer all aspects of existence ultimately to God. This paper suggests that Milton employed Adam, Eve, Christ and Satan not only to demonstrate the power of God but to illustrate the various types of life available to man. Eve and Satan are quite obviously the inferior counterparts of Adam and Christ. Eve and Satan are beings whose lives are controlled and directed by their reliance on degenerative reason. Christ and Adam are directed by regenerative (right) reason. From earliest times there has been an association of the type of being characterized by Eve and Satan with the "feminine," frequently termed the "effeminate" nature of man. The association is not a physical one, but rather stems from a philosophical idea.

Milton associates the basic weakness in man with the effeminate nature of his being. It is apparent in "Paradise Lost" and also in "Samson Agonistes":

Who with a grain of manhood well resolved
Might easily have shook off all her snares;
But foul effeminancy held me yoked
Her bondslave.

11. 408-411

Biblical references establish the female as an agent of temptation. These incidents link the female with the feminine principle's evil desire to tempt others. The most notable examples of well-meaning males led into sin by women are all considered to be types of Christ—Adam, Samson, and David. David's descendence from Adam is direct and he, like Adam, is tempted. The temptation is by the woman Bathsheba. In the New Testament the comparison is complete. Jesus is from the "house and the lineage of David." Like his prefigurements, he, too, is
tempted and the temptation is by Satan. Obviously these traits are not limited physically to one sex or the other biologically, but they are characteristic of a certain type of nature—the feminine.

Our culture and our myths have ascribed certain characteristics to the feminine nature. From as early as the ancient Greeks with the myth of Pandora and her temptation of Prometheus, man has connected evil with the feminine. In order to explain his failures man has repeatedly blamed his sins on the feminine (effeminate) part of his nature. Thus, it has been easy to ascribe those less than desirable traits—pride, envy, deception—to the feminine. Christianity added to and reinforced those concepts of women which were a part of the mythological versions of creation, and Milton wrote within that Christian framework.

The philosophical concepts of the masculine and the feminine were so much a part of the thinking of man up through at least the seventeenth century that they were employed perhaps unconsciously in the creation of characters. A respected character was almost always portrayed in terms of the masculine philosophical concept whether or not the character was biologically masculine. Likewise, an undesirable character was portrayed in terms which embodied the feminine philosophical concept. Christian commentators, while defining explicitly the philosophical concept of the feminine and providing artists with a substantial background for the creation of characters in this mold, did not establish the same sort of basis for the dramatic portrayal of Satan. In creating his Satan Milton relied on ideas of degeneracy and inferiority which readers would not only identify as evil but on values
which readers would know and accept as real. These values—degenerative reason, evil, envy, and a desire to tempt and deceive—were a part of the philosophical concept of the feminine. By associating the familiar concept of the feminine with the unknown—the dramatic characteristics of Satan—Milton created a realized presence in "Paradise Lost."
Footnotes


4. Ibid., pp. 194-195.


7. Duncan, p. 128.


11. Robertson, p. 265.

12. Ibid., p. 321.


18. de Beauvoir, p. 90.


20. Owst, p. 376.


22. Ibid., p. 361.


32. Weber, p. 54.
33 Fish, p. 249.
34 Ibid., p. 247.
35 Hoopes, p. 198.
36 Fish, p. 252.
38 Stein, p. 95.
39 Ibid.
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