

JOHN MILTON AND THE POETICS OF SOLITUDE

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At a time when religion, community, and family formed the basis of society, John Milton openly advocated separation and difference, whether through divorce, through division of church and state, church disestablishment, or through his own assertions of poetic superiority and the singular ability to “justify the ways of God to men” (*PL*, 1.26). My five-chapter dissertation examines each of these ruptures via a concept intrinsic to all of them, the concept of solitude. Even as solitude was beginning to emerge as a positive notion and practice of individuation within early modern society, Milton was complicating it. Instead of a practice, he theorized solitude as a mode of being essential to human creatures, modeled on his God, who is “alone / From all eternity” (*PL*, 8.405). Different from us, God invites us to be different from each other, an invitation we answer through our individual solitudes. This emphasis on solitude opens my dissertation to readings both historical and theoretical. Historically, I situate Milton as a radical dissident, whose notion of solitude overturns an Aristotelian system based in human sociability. For Aristotle, sociability defines the human, insofar as “he who is unable to live in society [...] must be either a beast or a god” (*Politics*, 1130). In this way, Milton departs from the solitude-opposing philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, while also finding a kindred spirit in the writing of Lucy Hutchinson. Theoretically, I identify Milton with a line of thinkers that includes figures such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Giorgio Agamben, and Jacques Derrida.

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## Solitude and Difference in Milton's Poetry and Prose

In a central passage from *Areopagitica*, John Milton identifies a connection between reading morally ambiguous texts and living in a morally ambiguous world. Whether one is reading a written text or interpreting the text of the moral universe, Milton believes, in both cases, what “purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary” (*YP* 2, 515).<sup>1</sup> Though not stated here, Milton imagines these purity-producing trials as occurring in solitude, as even a cursory glance at his poetry will serve to indicate. Moments before creating a mate for Adam, for instance, God explains that his foregoing solitude was only meant to “try” him, adding that the various creatures Adam hitherto encountered were “for trial only brought, / To see how thou couldst judge of fit and meet” (8.437-448). Similarly, when Eve desires solitude in Book 9 of the epic, Adam implores her to “trial choose / With me, best witness of thy virtue tried” (9.316-317). Upon the Son's entrance into the desert in *Paradise Regained*, “the better to converse / With solitude,” Satan appears in order “to try” him (1.191; 123). “[A]lone and helpless,” the Lady of *Comus* will “in the happy trial most glory prove” (582, 591). Samson's solitude at the mill also ends in a “trial” of “strength” (1643-1644). More than coincidental, Milton intentionally describes these characters as existing in solitude during times of trial. Whatever the situation, and more could be named, images of the solitary invariably precede moments of trial throughout Milton's texts, both poetry and prose, suggesting solitude's indispensability to his conception of Christian virtue and human freedom.

Insofar as we cannot know in advance when trial will occur, however, Milton presents us with a dilemma, one that guides my research in the following chapters. Is not the ultimate trial one of grasping trials of moment amidst the struggles of everyday life—of grasping *kairos* in the

linear unfolding of *chronos*? Assuming solitude serves as a precondition of trial, in what sense must we *always* be alone, then, and thus always prepared for trial, should one happen to occur? Rather than offer a dichotomized solution to this dilemma, in which humans are either alone and prepared for trial or else together and unprepared, Milton intensifies the problem over the course of his literary career by imagining humans as simultaneously alone and together, different and alike, hierarchically separated and monistically one. This dual commitment to solitude and society appears as early as the companion poems, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, a literary diptych dating from sometime between 1629 and 1631. In these poems, Milton holds in balance the opposing virtues of mirth and melancholy. Not until the early 1640s, however, does the emotional equilibrium originally found in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* begin to shift, as Milton confronts growing divisions in church and state, the isolation of a failed marriage, the death of his friend, Charles Diodati, the difficulty of finding intellectual companions in England, as well as his degenerative blindness. While still committed to both solitude and society as complimentary concepts, the nature of those commitments starts to change in the face of these hardships. Increasingly, Milton writes of solitude as a permanent human condition, and companionship as a human ideal, something to be desired but perhaps never (or only partially) attainable, at least in this life.<sup>2</sup> In 1647, for instance, Milton writes to Florentine friend and polymath, Carlo Dati, to let him know that he is “forced to live in almost perpetual solitude,” a sentiment whose adverbial qualification “almost” will drop from the equation when writing his greatest verse (*YP* 2, 763). If Milton’s allegiance seems divided between the goddess of mirth and “divinest Melancholy” in the *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, that indecisiveness certainly ends by the time he writes *Paradise Lost*, a poem which justifies to men the ways of a God “alone / From all eternity,” who, like the enshrouded personification of melancholy in *Il Penseroso*,

appears “Throned inaccessible,” except when he “shad’st / The full blaze of [his] beams” (8.405-406; 3.377-378). This is the same God in whose image we are made, “Inward and outward both, his image fair” (8.221).

His growing belief in permanent human solitude should not be taken as a sign of resignation, though. As the precondition of trial, solitude enables and even prepares a person to engage in free and virtuous action in a world in which evil always exists as a potential. Without naming it as such, Milton’s emphasis on the importance of solitude to Christian society serves as the basis for his argument against imprimatur in *Areopagitica*, and will continue to appear in various forms in prose tracts after it. Claiming he “cannot praise a fugitive and cloister’d vertue, unexercis’d & unbreath’d,” Milton deems solitary trials like those described above as necessary to the “true warfaring Christian” (*YP* 2, 515). This emphasis on physical exercise returns again later, where he relates how

our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion. Truth is compar’d in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetuall progression, they sick’n into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretick in the truth; and if he beleeve things only because his Pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determins, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds, becomes his heresie. (*YP* 2, 543)

If lacking in movement, truth will necessarily atrophy, according to Milton, who regards exercise performed for the body as analogous to the maintenance of faith. Without this active seeking, which must occur in solitude, a “man may be a heretick in the truth,” but for the wrong reason, holding the right information, but without testing that information for himself. In his theologically radical and posthumously published tome, *Christian Doctrine*, Milton summarizes

the necessity of Christian solitude in writing that godly truth reveals itself “only to the individual faith of each man, and demands of us that any man who wishes to be saved should work out his beliefs for himself,” and, separately, that “Every believer is entitled to interpret the scriptures; and by that I mean interpret them for himself” (YP 6, 118 and 583). His is not merely a theology *sola fide*, by faith alone, but also a faith *in aloneness itself*, an aloneness that differentiates us from each other, even as it enables us to make a difference in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Milton certainly experienced solitary trials of his own, the greatest occurring during the middle and end of his life. Writing in the *Second Defense*, his polemical rejoinder to Salmasius, a pro-royalist writer from the continent, he asserts that “In time of trial, I was neither cast down in spirit nor unduly fearful of envy or death” (YP 4, 552-553). He describes himself as a man of “greater strength of mind than of body,” who avoided the “toils and dangers” of actual war in order to service the state through a different sort of battle. While admitting that he “admire[s] the heroes victorious in battle,” he nevertheless regards his solitary task of “defending the very defenders” as akin to a physical confrontation: “I met [Salmasius] in single combat and plunged into his reviling throat this pen, the weapon of his own choice” (YP 4, 552-556). The comparison between writer and warrior emerges at other moments throughout his texts, as well, most notably, in *Colasterion*, where he compares his vituperations against an anonymous pamphleteer to “Hercules [...] carry[ing] dung out of the *Augean* stable” (YP 2, 756). Whether carrying dung from the stable or turning a “muddy pool” into a “streaming fountain,” Milton insists that Christian purity involves trial, and that trial entails an active, solitary, and perhaps (based on the metaphors used) unsanitary searching for truth, a search made all the more difficult because of the fact that “Good and evill we know in the field of this World grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involv’d and interwoven with the knowledge of

evill, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discern'd" (*YP* 2, 514). Absent the "incessant labour" that goes into separating good from evil, a labor of trial and solitude, we risk slipping into that "muddy pool of conformity and tradition." In *Tetrachordon*, he describes labor of this sort as the primary occupation of a Christian, relegating marital conversation to that which occurs only because "No mortall nature can endure either in the actions of Religion, or study of wisdom, without sometime slackening the cords of intense thought and labour" (*YP* 2, 596). As it turns out, not even Hercules could fling dung all the livelong day, even if such flinging is necessary for understanding Christian truth.

Yet, critics routinely disagree about the nature of Miltonic religious truth and the role of solitary dissent in its creation or discovery.<sup>4</sup> Constructivists such as Joanna Picciotto argue that Milton participated alongside other seventeenth-century thinkers in a "labor of truth production" (5). She claims that Milton regarded truth as an "ongoing collaborative construction," and that, for him, as for many in his cohort, "Diversity of opinion was only tolerable to the extent that it offered a means toward ultimate consensus" (5). Furthermore, Picciotto believes participants in this ongoing collaboration "gain an anticipatory experience of that oneness" during their labors, asserting that "Even the 'I' of seventeenth-century spiritual autobiography registers the displacement of the personal voice by another, impersonal one" (8-9). In her account, then, differences of mind (if they exist at all) eventually give way to worldly consensus, in a process of assimilation that sees the individual subsumed by a transcendental ideal. A provocative claim, indeed, and, as with all provocative claims, it is also one worth investigating. How impersonal is Milton's first-person, autobiographical statement, "I met [Salmasius] in single combat and plunged into his reviling throat this pen, the weapon of his own choice"? The innocent labors heralded in Picciotto's title would have us believe that humans were made in the image of

Raphael, the mild-mannered and congenial angel, and not his more cantankerous and solitary God, whose conspiratorial defense of himself against suspected allegation more closely resembles how Milton the polemicist actually wrote. Even assuming we *were* made in the image of Raphael, however, that would not by itself preclude dissent and difference. As the work of N.K. Sugimura demonstrates, the angelic world consists in a “totality of oneness in which differences nonetheless abound,” as Milton tries to reconcile “the Many and the one,” “difference with unity,” while at the same time not “compromising the idea of the individual, the union, or the theodicy in the process” (159; 195).

Sugimura claims Milton “falls short” in his attempt to theorize a “transcendental unity or oneness” among the angels (195). However, I regard the persistent tension between the one and the many as a deliberate textual complication in Milton’s work, and, as such, one of his greatest achievements as a writer. Without it, solitude would have no place in his poetry and prose, or, for that matter, in the greater world. By intentionally withholding transcendental unity, Milton produces a version of solitude that locates the individual in a complex world of difference and division. Using the metaphor of God’s spiritual church, he writes in *Areopagitica* that

there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world; neither can every peece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection consists in this, that out of the many moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes arises the goodly and the gracefull symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure. (*YP* 2, 555)

In this life, at least, there can be no consensus among believers, much the same way that the architecture of a church consists not in a “continuous” and unified structure, but rather

“contiguous” subdivisions that “commend” the whole without elevating it to some transcendental status that dissolves the ontic divisions separating one individual from another, thereby eliminating the possibility of solitude. Truth *is* constructed in Milton’s world, but those constructing it do so through division and dissimilitude, not an unconditional commitment to worldly consensus. In fact, Milton seems intent on postponing consensus until the next life, if it should occur at all. As Balachandra Rajan observes, Milton identifies himself as among those Puritans committed to “multiplying dissensions as a creative ferment within which the collective search was to be launched and out of which the redeemed consensus would emerge” (11).<sup>5</sup> While the teleological end still remains the “gracefull symmetry” of the redeemed church, it is a goal best achieved through “brotherly dissimilitudes,” which persist as palimpsestic traces that ensure solitude as a possibility, whether in heaven or hell, in Eden or the postlapsarian world.

The metaphor of the church turns arborescent in the following passage, as Milton defends the “firm root, out of which we all grow, though into branches” (*YP* 2, 556). The shift from rigid and lifeless stone and timber to the living root and its outspread branches, responsive to wind and weather, emphasizes change over time, but change that produces *more* variety, not less, as the tree grows into a labyrinthine network of intermingling (though not interpenetrating) branches. This image recalls Raphael’s description of spiritual growth in *Paradise Lost*, connecting Milton’s notion of solitary dissent with his monism. Describing the universe as “one first matter all / Indued with various forms, various degrees / Of substance, and in things that live, of life,” Raphael claims that humans might be able to “body up to spirit work,” a process he compares to a pullulating tree:

So from the root

Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves,

More aerie, last the bright consummate floure

Spirits odorous breathes: (5.472-482).

By feeding on these “Spirits odorous,” Raphael implies that we, too, might become angelic, participating in conversation by intuition rather than discourse. Of course, that time is not yet come, and the convoluted syntax of Raphael’s speech works to remind us that we are very much still discursive beings, operating within the imperfect medium of words. Take, for instance, the start-stop of the lines following the colon of line 482, which read “flours and thir fruit / Mans nourishment, by gradual scale sublim’d / To vital Spirits aspire, to animal, / To intellectual, give both life and sense, / Fancy and understanding” (482-486). As an attempt to accommodate our understanding of spiritual rarefaction, this passage in many ways has the opposite effect on the reader. The phrase itself seems to restart multiple times, recreating in the mind of the reader the bifurcating structure of the very tree he is in the midst of describing. Its ramose feel enacts at the sentence level a process of growth that depends on a grammar of incongruity, which, extrapolated to the community, results in what John Rogers labels an “inflexible stratification” that complicates Milton’s otherwise “massive liberalization of the cosmos” (111; 113). Rogers attributes this hierarchy to Milton’s post-Restoration oligarchical politics, a late-in-life concession to rule by minority. Meanwhile, I would suggest that Miltonic hierarchies are consistent with his commitment to solitude and difference, in prelapsarian Eden and beyond. “Wherever beings are arranged in orders,” writes Diane McColley of Milton’s universe, “the arrangement is made for the augmentation of each member, for greater individuation through manifold relations, and for the greater splendor of their mutual joy” (*Milton’s Eve*, 39).

The operative term in Raphael’s phrase “body up to spirit work” is the last one, since the task of ascending toward God is by no means easy, nor, I would add, is it collaborative among

humans, at least insofar as that term denotes perfect unity. Like God himself, who is “alone / From all eternity,” and in whose act of creation he casts down the “The black tartareous cold infernal dregs / Adverse to life,” we must all experience solitary trials that find us siphoning the “muddy pool of conformity and tradition” and cleaning “dung” from the “Augean stables” (8.405-406; 7.238-239). Christian freedom in fact depends on solitary acts such as these, in which we produce truth by separating good from evil, right from wrong. To be made in God’s image, “Inward and outward both, his image fair,” is to be made alone, which itself serves as the prerequisite for free thinking and choice (8.221). Without the “freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing,” writes Milton in *Areopagitica*, Adam would have been “a meer artificiall *Adam*, such an *Adam* as he is in the motions” (*YP* 2, 527). Similarly, the God of *Paradise Lost* describes Adam and Eve as “authors to themselves in all / Both what they judge and what they choose; for so / I formed them free, and free they must remain, / Till they enthrall themselves” (3.122-125). In what does this freedom consist, if not the freedom to make choices on their own, as solitary individuals, a freedom that a good marriage encourages, and a bad one impedes? Though expressed in the language of freedom and choice, Milton voices his ideal definition of solitude through God at this moment, a solitude that brings with it the ability to think and act in a manner completely and unimaginably free. In solitude, a person can choose to “stand and wait,” or, if the occasion demands it, Samsonically rise up, “Like that self-begotten bird / In the Arabian woods embossed,” who suddenly reemerged, “vigorous most / When most unactive deemed” (1699-1705). Rather than an effect of these decisions, Miltonic solitude functions as their precondition. We must be alone when choosing; otherwise, choosing itself fails to be a free action, becoming instead a version of group-think. While many Christians can (and should) make the same choice,

they must make that choice individually, hence Milton's emphasis on reading and interpreting the Bible by oneself.

Nor does marriage automatically eliminate an individual's solitude. For all of Milton's talk in the divorce tracts about marriage as a union of like minds—and there is a lot of such talk—he ultimately conceives this union not as complete unity, but as a peaceful opportunity to manifest individual difference. “[T]he soul,” writes Milton in *Tetrachordon*, “cannot well doe without company, so in no company so well as where the different sexe in most resembling unlikenes, and most unlike resemblance cannot but please best and be pleas'd in the aptitude of that variety” (*YP* 2, 597). Many scholars assume Milton conceived of marriage in terms of an Aristotelian model of friendship based in the likeness of the partners, and to a certain extent this is clearly the case. After all, God proclaims in *Paradise Lost* that Eve was created in Adam's “likeness” (8.450). Yet, Milton's emphasis here in *Tetrachordon* and elsewhere in his poetry and prose on the “different sexe” and the “unlikenes” of the partners suggests he was as much or more influenced by a Greek pederastic model of friendship. Adapting this model to suit a heterosexual union, he replaces the hierarchy of man/boy found in the works of Plato and other Greek texts with the hierarchy of husband/wife, as reified in the much-discussed description of Adam and Eve as “He for God only, she for God in him” (4.299). While Eve is created in Adam's “likeness,” implying the Aristotelian model, it is important to remember that likeness is not sameness, and that differences abound even between the partners of an ideal marriage. True as it might be that husband and wife offer “mutual help / And mutual love” to each other, the help and love they bring to marriage necessarily differs depending on the individuals involved (4.727-728). So committed is Milton to this idea of individual difference in marriage that he chooses to endorse it even when that endorsement means disrupting the gendering of the

aforementioned hierarchy. In the event that a woman should “exceed her husband in prudence and dexterity,” Milton writes, “the wiser should govern the lesse wise, whether male or female” (*YP* 2, 589). The sheer radicality of this statement demonstrates the importance of hierarchy to Milton’s conception of marriage, a hierarchy that imports difference and solitude into the marital arrangement, no matter which gender takes the lead.

Milton returns to the idea of individual difference only a few pages later in *Tetrachordon*. To the extent that “the unity of minde is neerer and greater then the union of bodies,” he argues, so doubtles, is the dissimilitude greater, and more dividuall, as that which makes between bodies all difference and distinction. Especially when as besides the singular and substantial differences of every Soul, there is an intimat quality of good or evil, through the whol progeny of *Adam*, which like a radical heat, or mortal chilnes joyns them, or disjoyns them irresistibly. (*YP* 2, 606)

Though written in the service of defending divorce, this passage also reveals a lot about Milton’s understanding of marital unity, which always must account for the “the singular and substantial differences of every Soul.” Nor is this the only passage in which unity of mind involves degrees of difference. In the same way the “the unity of minde is *neerer* and greater then the union of bodies” in marriage, so too is marriage “the *nearest* resemblance of our union with Christ,” a passage that itself recalls Abdiel’s claim that God intends “to exalt / Our happy state under one head more *near* / United” and Raphael’s description of spirits “*nearer* to [God] placed or *nearer* tending” (*YP* 2, 606; 5.829-831; 476, my italics). Similarly, in Milton’s manifesto on pedagogy, *Of Education*, he writes that “The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the *nearest* by possessing our souls of true vertue, which being united to the

heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection” (*YP* 2, 367, my italics). In all these cases, unity consists in “nearness,” not sameness, suggesting residual and permanent difference via proximity. This is in contrast to Pico della Mirandola’s *Orations on the Dignity of Man*, a central text in Renaissance humanism. Pico’s work outlines a neo-platonic process by which a person might “gather himself into the centre of his own unity, thus becoming a single spirit with God in the solitary darkness of the Father, he, who had been placed above all things, will become superior to all things” (121). Whether in marriage in particular or his theology more broadly, Milton strategically and repeatedly avoids defining unity as consisting in what Pico calls a “single spirit.” Instead, unity involves a version of likeness that must always take into consideration the “singular and substantial differences of every Soul,” enabling solitude to persist within godly society, even the society of marriage. These differences of soul, which exist among the angels, too, as demonstrated during Satan’s decision to rebel, but also Abdiel’s decision to stand firm, maintaining a “constant mind / Though single,” create opportunities for solitary trial “by what is contrary” throughout Milton’s moral universe (5.902-903).

Reading these passages alongside one another, I am inclined to qualify Stephen Fallon’s monistic interpretation of Milton’s “union of minds,” which, he argues, “is more than metaphorical” (76). In the first passage cited above, Milton identifies the soul as merely “resembling unlikeness,” but the second passage reveals that “every soul” contains “singular and substantial differences,” a statement that accords with Milton’s metaphor of the church consisting in “brotherly dissimilitudes,” and often using the same language. Unlike the divine union of God and Son, where, despite Milton’s anti-Trinitarianism, the two are still “one” to the extent that “they speak and act as one,” the union of husband and wife still admits of individual differences (*YP* 6, 220). The Son might unite with God “in the same way as we are one with

him,” but the union of like minds in marriage is a unity that in many ways still actively promotes difference (*YP* 6, 220).<sup>6</sup> In short, then, Miltonic marriage ends not in perfect unity, much less the conformity (literally, having the same form) implied by Fallon’s monistic and non-metaphoric union. The unity of marriage emerges as an effect of preliminary and permanent individual differences, and while the “one flesh” of marriage constitutes a “union of the most intimate nature,” it is not therefore “indissoluble or indivisible,” as Milton states in *Christian Doctrine* (*YP* 6, 371).

That these individual differences signal a good version of marital solitude, and not simply individuality, is paradigmatically registered in the final image of Milton’s epic, in which Adam and Eve “hand in hand with wandering steps and slow, / Through Eden took their solitary way” (12.648-649). The apparent contradiction of these final lines—a couple together, yet still alone—flustered eighteenth-century critic Richard Bentley to such a degree that he emended them to suit his own understanding of marriage based, much as critics after him, on mutuality and likeness. This is not to deny that the language of likeness pervades the divorce tracts, and, furthermore, that solitude is roundly condemned. Fallon’s argument in favor monism insists “the dualism of the tracts is conscious and strategic,” and that Milton “separat[es] his audience into wise monists and blind dualists.” I would add to his observation that Milton’s use of *monism* is also strategic. Milton argues for the *inseparability* of properly married couples in terms that verge on monistic because this argument, the monistic one, actually affords him the opposite argument, which states that *improperly* married couples should be able to separate lawfully. However, his emphasis on individual difference still appears at key moments throughout the divorce tracts, beginning with the prologue to *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, where Milton describes

himself as “the sole advocate of a discount’ nanc’t truth,” suggesting the solitude he denounces throughout the tracts is not the same solitude that attended their literary production (*YP* 2, 224).

The following chapters take as their starting point the idea that Milton’s world is one of trial, that trial entails making a difference, and, finally, that this difference is both a sign and surety of our solitude. Of course, as with any trial, physical or spiritual, defeat is always a possibility. Despite his best efforts to convince her to “trial choose / With me, best witness of thy virtue tried,” Eve wanders off, a wandering that recalls the Latin meaning of “error,” to stray mentally or geographically. Contending that God has prepared them for trials “single or combined,” Eve insists they work alone, since “virtue unassayed” is really no virtue at all (9.339; 335). In terms of its logic, this statement is strikingly similar to Milton’s claim in *Areopagitica* that he “cannot praise a fugitive and cloister’d vertue, unexercis’d & unbreath’d.”<sup>7</sup> Yet, Adam’s desire that she “trial choose” with him complicates matters by calling into question not only what constitutes trial, but also, insofar as trial involves solitude, what it means to be “single,” both here and elsewhere in Milton’s works. How will we know when a real trial manifests, as opposed to some lookalike? Moreover, is not this waiting itself a form of trial, one that tests our ability to differentiate between trials real and those spurious? If solitude is necessary for trial, must we always be alone, and thus always ready to contend with adversity in the event of its appearance? Must we, as Eve suggests to Adam, “divide our labors” (9.214)? The answers to these questions are complex, and often differ, depending on the situation. Stanley Fish has built a career around the possibility of our reading these contexts incorrectly, which, for him, is less a possibility than inevitability. For Fish, the reader is always already *unfit*, and thus doomed to misread Milton’s work, a situation that has many feeling as though perhaps the only fit reader of Milton is Fish himself, whose panoptic glance in *Surprised by Sin* sees the poem as a “unity, infused at every

point with a single stable meaning” (354). I take a much different approach to Milton’s poetry. Through my analysis, I demonstrate that Miltonic trials, including the trial of reading the poet’s own words, need not end in interpretive failure, though we must, indeed, “divide our labours” as critics. To read aright, we must read alone, according to Milton, who believes that trials must be confronted individually, even trials such as those posed by his own poetry, which involve many people reading the same text, responding to the same general problem set. Readers may treat these chapters, then, as exercises in the Miltonic sense of that term, a grasping at the “truth” of his poems through five solitary trials.

That Milton so consistently associates solitude with moments of trial and interpretation might suggest an affinity between the poet and the new scientists, who likewise hailed solitude as necessary for trials of their own. The scientific experiments conducted by members of the Royal Society, while certainly generating lively public debate, also initiated what Steven Shapin calls “a retreat to a redefined and relegitimized solitude,” as an older faith-based solitude was repurposed into a site to test a very different sort of faith, this one founded on reason and practices of empiricism (203). Following the precepts outlined in Francis Bacon’s *Novum Organum*, which promotes an inductive methodology that insists practitioners “travel always through the forest of experience and particular things,” the new scientists routinely use the words “try” and “trial” to describe their solitary activities (10). When discussing an experiment that involves heating various objects using a magnifying glass, for instance, Bacon invites readers to “Try an experiment with burning-glasses,” later commanding them, “the experiment should be tried” (123-124). Milton himself seems keenly aware of the potential connection between the solitary trials of his characters and the experiments conducted by the scientists while alone. As a number of critics have noted,<sup>8</sup> the language of scientific empiricism surrounds Eve’s decision to

eat the fruit, a decision that occurs away from Adam, enabling a possible crossover between his version of solitude and the solitude of the scientists. The trials conducted by the solitary scientists, however, generally differ from those of Milton's solitary characters. Whereas the scientists use solitude to search for a truth independent of the person performing the search, Milton believes that a person can actually be, as he puts it in *Areopagitica*, a "heretick in the truth," yet believe for the wrong reason, placing much greater emphasis on the disposition of the person conducting the search than that which the search reveals. When God parades the animals before Adam, the point is not to perform a scientific experiment, since, as Adam admits, his spontaneous taxonomy is the result of God-endued apprehension. Rather, the trial is meant to test Adam himself, to see how well he can "judge of fit and meet."

Milton's emphasis on the interrelation between solitude and choice can be traced back to God's original creation, wherein he "retire[s]" from the world, appointing the Son, "His Word," to take the "golden compasses" and "circumscribe this universe," separating the heavens and earth from chaos, that "vast profundity obscure," while "Cherub and seraph" observe this action "from the shore" (7.170-231). God's solitude, his decision to separate and retire from the Son, an act that accords with Milton's anti-Trinitarianism, sets the standard for all future Miltonic relationships. Importantly, Milton's narratorial self-reference during the invocation to Book 7 involves a separation conspicuously similar to the separation that occurs between God and Son only two hundred lines after it. Describing himself as a man "fallen on evil days, / On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues, / In darkness, and with dangers compassed round, / And solitude," Milton quickly turns this pervading sense of loss into labor, instructing his muse to "fit audience find, though few," and, furthermore, to "drive far off the barbarous dissonance / Of Bacchus and his revellers" (7.23-33). Replace the "fit audience" with "Cherub and seraph,"

among other angelic orders, and the “barbarous dissonance” with the “black tartareous cold infernal dregs,” and the scene begins to resemble God’s command that the Son circumscribe and order the universe, expelling any aleatory elements, while he withdraws to a place of solitude. Here, it is the muse, Urania, who performs the expulsion, and Milton who describes himself as alone. Though outsourced to his muse, this cleanup project resembles the decontaminations of the “Augean stables” or the “muddy pools.” Lest we confuse these acts of decontamination differ from the aforementioned “brotherly dissimilitudes,” we must remember that “brotherly dissimilitudes” imply organized difference through “gracefull symmetry,” whereas “barbarous dissonance” suggests complete and utter chaos in need of purgation. Different from each other, Milton and his God are also different from their respective creations, which are themselves different from all possible creations. In Milton’s view, differences are created, not ready-made, and solitude is the mode of that creation. Whereas the universe is the singular manifestation of God’s superior will, Milton’s discursive output attests to his own intellect and the ability to conjure “Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme” (1.16). In both cases, then, solitude coincides with a creation whose uniqueness guarantees the continued solitude of its author.

In the postlapsarian world, the greatest threat is not difference, whose presence in God’s creation-by-division finds itself differentially repeated in seventeenth-century England. Rather, the real threat entails confusing difference for sameness. Solitude predicated on individual difference is therefore not the problem; in fact, it is concomitant with creation. This might seem counterintuitive, given that the fall is often figured in the early modern period as a moment of separation. In Milton’s view, however, the worst consequence of the fall is not more fracturing, but instead the opposite, a process of fusion, indeed, *confusion*. With this sort of confusion comes conformity, as evidenced by Catholics, whose servility Milton attributes to their continued

refusal of reformation theology. In refusing reformation, they refuse difference itself, since Reformation theology is an essential difference upon which depend any future theological differences. The way out of this predicament is not through more conformity, but more difference, since “out of many moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportionall arises the goodly and the gracefull symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure.” The “gracefull symmetry” of God’s reformed church, Milton implies, actually depends on the freely willed “dissimilitudes” of its members, whose differences function to ensure their solitudes. By this logic, solitariness is not one possible attitude among many; rather, it is the original and necessary comportment of a Christian living in a world constantly threatened by sameness and conformity.

As the correlative of creation and difference, Miltonic solitude better facilitates our understanding of his unorthodox religion and politics than an analysis based solely on his tolerationist principles, which, Sharon Achinstein rightly observes, are largely absent from his epic poetry. “While *Areopagitica* praised the combat of ideas, singing admiringly of the noisy and diverse city of London,” she claims that, “in his epics, however, a positive representation of human difference and diversity is difficult to find” (227). *Not* difficult to find in his epics, though, are representations of solitude. Through each of their solitudes, Milton’s characters variously enact their ideological differences from each other, as well as from God, Satan, angels, animals, and even the reader. That Milton includes so many representations of solitude suggests his commitment to a wide range of belief and experience, while also registering his hesitancy concerning toleration, which, if applied without discretion, could actually limit difference through its emphasis on universal acceptance. If *everyone* is tolerated, then toleration itself becomes something of a categorical imperative, and, as such, a new version of conformity. This

perhaps explains Milton's rampant anti-Catholicism. Unable to tolerate others, they are themselves intolerable, according to Milton. Instead of focusing on his principle of toleration, then, I contend that we must critically examine Milton's solitude if we are to gain access to his complex political and religious convictions. Unlike the universal logic operative in toleration, which assumes *a priori* the potential worthiness of all, Milton prefers the experiential model of solitude, which serves as a space of trial, in which solitary figures must prove their worth, while also confirming his belief, first espoused in *Areopagitica*, and then again in *Christian Doctrine*, that "unto the pure all things are pure[,] but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (*YP* 6, 535). Milton does not merely tolerate difference, as others suggest, he actively promotes it in and through solitude.

If Miltonic solitude coincides with singular moments of creation, then it differs from the early modern notion of privacy. Often associated with the space of the closet, the word "privacy" typically involves property, and, for that reason, would call to the early modern mind the notion of *oikos*, or household economy. As Lena Orlin observes, the "Tudor closet had its genesis in the accumulation of valuable goods," not the "self-expression possible in solitude" (299; 306). Orlin's distinction between "valuable goods" (associated with privacy) and "self-expression" (associated with solitude) is often overlooked by other scholars of the period. Diana Webb, for instance, uses the terms "solitude" and "privacy" interchangeably, arguing that Renaissance privacy actually modeled itself on medieval religious solitude. In the late medieval period, she writes, the two phenomena intersected over a goal common both to religious solitaries and the emerging bourgeoisie alike, namely, the pursuit of secular knowledge. Eventually, she claims, solitude was no longer just a religious compulsion, but also a personal choice. "If Petrarch had had the word at his disposal," she writes, "he might well have spoken of privacy rather than

solitude” (155). According to Webb’s logic, by the time Italian humanism entered early modern English discourse, solitude was already coterminous with the privacy of the rights-based individual.

To help explain these scholarly differences, one needs to examine how the word “privacy” evolved between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Orlin suggests, privacy was associated with property during the earlier of these centuries, not “the self-expression possible in solitude,” so that, contrary to Webb, Petrarch would likely *not* have used the word privacy when discussing his solitude. This arrangement changes by the mid seventeenth-century, however, as privacy begins to designate a specific variety of self-expressive solitude, but one that still preserves its connection to property. Retaining its affiliation with *oikos*, privacy of the seventeenth century specifies a version of solitude attached to certain locales and sets of religious and scholarly practices.<sup>9</sup> Take, for instance, George Mackenzie’s “A Moral Essay, Preferring Solitude to Publick Employment,” which directly links the closet, a room considered private (and thus non-solitary) by current scholars, with a moment of self-expressive solitude. Mackenzie asserts that God “hath commanded us to retire to our Closets (the most solitary of all our rooms) and to make these yet more retired, hath ordained us to close the doors behind us when we make any religious applications to him” (51). When Mackenzie discusses the solitude of the closet, he identifies it with routine practices of devotion, including the simple habit of closing the door, which he says God “ordained.” For him, as for many other writers of the seventeenth century, the closet now *does* enable solitude, something it could not have done (or only very rarely done) in the sixteenth century of Orlin’s scholarship. However, it is solitude still attached to a specific place and a routine devotional practice, and for that reason it might more accurately be called privacy.

Milton also associates the solitude of privacy with specific places and practices. Every night in prelapsarian Eden, for instance, reason “retires / Into her *private* cell” while we sleep, as Adam explains to Eve in *Paradise Lost* (5.108, my italics). The practice occurs nightly, the place is always the same, which suggests that Milton identifies privacy with routine activities of everyday life. A similar use of privacy appears at the end of *Paradise Regained*. Inviting us to read the Son’s solitude in the desert as a supernatural—possibly even allegorical—experience for the better part of the poem, the narrator then employs bathos in its final two lines, emptying the poem of any metaphorical content when describing how “he unobserved / Home to his mother’s house private returned” (638-39). What began as an abstract solitude in the woods ends when the Son returns to his status as a “private” individual and to the private property of his “mother’s house.” In general, then, it might be said that Milton reserves the word “privacy” and its variants for domestic places and habits, while he employs the word “solitude” when referring to moments of trial, which, in all his poems, occur outside, typically in a thickly wooded setting. Despite these geographic differences, however, it is not always easy to decide when an everyday solitude of privacy might become the solitude of trial. Just because the Son (and narrator) easily distinguishes between the spiritual call to solitary trial in the desert and the “private” return to his “mother’s house” does not make the task any easier for the rest of us. I address the difficulties of this distinction in Chapter 3, when discussing Eve’s desire to exchange the domestic privacy of the bower for the solitary trial of the open field in Book 9 of the poem.

Because of its affiliation with trial and overcoming, I find that Milton’s understanding of solitude prefigures the counter-Enlightenment’s orientation to solitude, especially that of Friedrich Nietzsche. Though subscribing to vastly different belief systems, and situated on different sides of Enlightenment history, Milton and Nietzsche nevertheless represent what

theorist Jacques Derrida would describe as “friends of solitude, [...] inaccessible friends, friends who are alone because they are incomparable and without a common measure, reciprocity or equality,” who will receive their messages within “the darkness of a friendship which is not yet” (35; 42-43). Specifically, Derrida has in mind those passages from Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which the titular character, himself a prophet descended from his solitary residence on the mountain, seeks to teach not the common herd, but those “living companions who follow me because they want to follow themselves” (51). In a chapter from the book entitled “Of the Way of the Creator,” Zarathustra (and through him, Nietzsche) commands “Solitary man” to depart from the herd, but in such a way that he might become an *Übermensch*, a person who “create[s] beyond himself, and thus perishes” (91). Of course, despite these similarities between Nietzschean and Miltonic solitude, differences still abound between the two authors. Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* is someone who moves beyond Christian morality, a thought anathema to Milton. Yet, their mutual search for what Nietzsche (through Zarathustra) calls “living companions” and Milton calls his “fit audience” finds both thinkers alone for the same reason, each of them awaiting intellectuals who think like them by thinking on their own, that is, away from the herd. Writing from the shadows, to the shadows, both thinkers hope to find an intelligentsia of this sort, and, though they exist centuries apart, I would argue that each is an appropriate audience for the other. In the same way that Milton’s God keeps his back turned toward creation, “Throned inaccessible, but when thou shad’st / The full blaze of thy beams,” so these thinkers keep their metaphorical backs to each other, not as a sign of animosity, but in acknowledgment of their mutual commitment to the nonconformist principles of solitude (3.377-378).

Through the intersection of solitude and difference, then, my dissertation intervenes in critical debates that began in the seventeenth century, reemerge in the thinking of Friedrich Nietzsche and other counter-Enlightenment writers, and continue to matter today. Is it possible to be alone in the age of Internet and wireless devices, in which connectivity seems to encourage cultural conformity? Though his solitude is a response to conformity of a different sort, namely, the return to old political categories following the restoration of the king, as well as the proto-Enlightenment value of democratic and/or scientific unity, Milton's solitude not only teaches us about his own heterodox views, but also about the value of heterodoxy in a world of increased obedience to norms, where both the political left and right partake in a consumer culture that markets sameness in the guise of difference, where to be unique paradoxically means to be customizable. Whether I am discussing the original solitude of Adam in *Paradise Lost* or the solitude of Samson, that of Eve by the forbidden tree or the Son in the desert setting of *Paradise Regained*, I demonstrate the continued importance of solitude to Milton as a religious and political radical, whose commitment to a separatist ethic resulted in arguably the best poetry of his generation, as well as some of his generation's most incendiary politics.

### **Chapter Breakdown**

In chapter one, “‘Through Eden took their solitary way’: Solitude and Marriage in *Paradise Lost*,” I question Adam's debate tactics before the fall, arguing that his consent to Eve's departure marks his own departure from an individualist ethic he first learns while alone in Eden. My analysis begins with an examination of how Adam's understanding of solitude coincides with the recognition of his profound difference from beast and God. I contend that this difference (as well as the solitude that attends it) persists through Eve's creation and into their

marriage. Theirs is not a marriage based on exact likeness, but likeness in difference, society through solitude. Expanding on James Grantham Turner's work, *One Flesh*, which finds their relationship a "vision of equality-in-difference," this chapter argues that Eve's "likeness" to Adam paradoxically results from the fact that both of them must learn to recognize difference in the world, indeed, their own differences from each other (Turner, 280; 8.450).

In chapter two, "Satanic Solitude in the Works of Hobbes and Milton," I demonstrate how solitude performs a critical task in each of their political philosophies. Hobbes believes solitude short-circuits the imagination, resulting in delusions of grandeur that perpetuate the state of nature, a "war of every man against every man." Relying on Aristotle's notion that a solitary person must be either a beast or a god, Hobbes considers solitude a state of exception, to borrow a phrase from Agamben. After delving into Hobbsian epistemology, and the way in which solitude disrupts its proper functioning, I turn to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and specifically his hell, which closely resembles the delusions of grandeur that Hobbes claims persist in his solitary state of nature. Milton's Satan, I argue, bears a strong resemblance to Hobbes's solitary man in nature. However, Milton's solution to this Hobbesian problem is not the conformity that his philosopher counterpart imagines. In place of Hobbes's either/or philosophy, which presents society and solitude as opposing ends of a political ultimatum, Milton advocates for a society comprised of solitary individuals, and similarity through and because of difference.

My third chapter, "Placing Blame: *Otium* and Shade in *Paradise Lost*," theorizes the entangled concepts of solitude and *otium*. Like his predecessors, Milton understands *otium* as a temporary retreat from the business of public life intended to cultivate the *vita contemplativa*, the life of the mind. In Eden, *otium* always occurs in *umbra*, or shade, while physical labor occurs in the sun, associations Milton adapts from classical and biblical sources. Eve breaks this spatial tie

the day of the fall, as she seeks knowledge in broad daylight, away from the “faithful side” that “still shades” her (9.265-266). A violation of Eden’s sacred geography, Eve’s decision turns the blissful *otium* of prefallen Eden into what Milton describes as “intense thought and labor” after the fall (*YP* 2, 596). Rather than place all the blame on Eve, however, I also use this chapter to discuss the many similarities between her desire for more knowledge, and the idleness that results from that desire, and Milton’s well-nigh constant concerns over his own use of *otium* and good time management. Like Eve, Milton feels as though he cannot produce literary fruits (in Eve’s case, literal fruits) until he has learned more, leading him to a five-year retirement following his master’s degree, during which time he lived on his father’s dole.

I test the aforementioned connection between geographical and metaphorical *loci* in chapter four, “Allegory and Aloneness in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*,” a comparative analysis that examines the Son’s and Samson’s different responses to storms. Confronted by a storm that is made to appear allegorical, the Son immediately affirms its reality, even while tacitly admitting it *could be* read allegorically. In *Samson Agonistes*, a very different situation unfolds. Experiencing his own storm, Samson initially refuses to assign much meaning to it, claiming his “riddling days are past” (1064). Ultimately, though, he reads within the meteorological event an allegory of his own singular end, slaughtering the Philistines “As with the force of winds and waters pent” (1646). By relating his final act through the Messenger’s report, the poem suggests that any account of the event is already allegorical, thus confronting readers with their own fallen tendency toward allegoresis. If, as I suggest, reading Milton necessarily involves dividing our critical labors, this is the poem that proves it. More than any other poem in Milton’s corpus, *Samson Agonistes* divides critics ideologically, a division that Milton intends. The amicable disagreement among critics of the poem shows Milton’s “brotherly

dissimilarities” in action, as we all strive to locate meaning in a poem that ultimately showcases our readerly differences and our solitudes.

The fifth and last chapter, “Authorizing Solitude: Lucy Hutchinson and John Milton, Dalila and Samson” examines Hutchinson’s repurposing of the Samson and Dalila narrative. Aligning herself with Dalila, Hutchinson allegorizes a heroic image of the publicly dishonored Colonel, whom she identifies as a Samson figure. While doing so implicates her in an act of wifely betrayal, whether real or imagined, it also narrativizes her solitude as a self-authorizing act. Channeling the solitude of widowhood into an allegorical reworking of her marriage to the Colonel, Hutchinson complicates Milton’s notion of solitude by depicting it as the middle term in a negotiation between her family values and personal freedom. If Milton associates solitude with nonconformity, Hutchinson demonstrates that this sort of nonconformity poses different risks for women than it did for men, risks she is willing to take.

**“Through Eden took their solitary way”: Solitude and Marriage in *Paradise Lost***

In Book 8 of *Paradise Lost*, Adam prefaces the world’s first autobiography with a basic observation: “For man to tell how human life began / Is hard” (8.250-251). Though spoken by Adam, this comment also directly implicates John Milton, who, not there to witness Adam’s beginning, must imagine the history of his formation. Apparently, Milton is up to the task. Through a vividly conceptualized account of Adam’s solitude, his longest treatment of the subject, Milton does more than just speculate about Edenic origins; he also intervenes in important debates about human nature and its assumed sociality. Using the *Genesis* myth, Milton overhauls Aristotle’s belief, a near constant in early modern thought, that man is a naturally social creature, and that our humanity depends on likeness. For Aristotle, solitude functions as the limit point of our humanity, in which its defining feature, our sociality, suddenly discontinues, and in place of the human there stands “a beast or a god” (1130).<sup>1</sup> Alluding to Aristotle’s account of humanity, Milton depicts Adam alone and attempting to converse with animals and the deity. These conversations frustrate him, however, precisely because he is not a beast or a God, despite the fact that Aristotle’s maxim dictates that, while alone, he should be either one or the other. This revision on Milton’s part is especially crucial to understanding his conception of the human. In Aristotle’s account, a subject loses his/her humanity in solitude. Those who willfully leave society relinquish their likeness to other humans, and instead adopt the characteristics of a beast or a god. By contrast, Milton’s subject gains humanity while alone, a humanity that depends on his ability to differentiate himself from both beast and God. Rather than a humanity based in likeness, then, Milton’s humanity consists in radical otherness, as

Adam establishes his humanness *via negativa*, by what he is not. He knows he is human precisely because he differs from the solitary beasts around him, who “answer none returned,” as well as from God, whose solitude (“alone / From all eternity, for none I know / Second to me or like, equal much less”) renders him the physical embodiment of absolute difference (8.285; 405-407). For Milton, then, solitude makes a world of difference, literally.<sup>2</sup> Adam’s human ontogeny coincides with the dual realization that he is alone, and that to be alone is to be different from beast and God. If Milton promotes the “J” text of creation, which prioritizes Adam’s creation over Eve’s, it is primarily because this difference proves essential to his understanding of human development.<sup>3</sup>

Different from beast and God, Adam is also different from Eve, whose God-decreed “likeness” to him consists, first and foremost, in the fact that, like Adam, she too is born alone, and she too must establish her subjectivity *via negativa* (8.450).<sup>4</sup> Even this likeness, however, contains a difference, since, contrary to her male counterpart, who differentiates himself from beast and God, Eve is forced to choose between different versions of herself, one which appears as a “shape within the watery gleam,” and another in the form of godly Adam, her “other half” (4.461; 488). Born into different solitudes, Adam and Eve recognize and respond to different differences. As a result, they bring to marriage different understandings of difference itself.<sup>5</sup> Whereas God is so different that his difference cannot be thought (he truly is “alone / From all eternity”), Eve represents difference within reason, a recognizable difference, rendering both their solitudes finite, and therefore manageable. A union of idealized difference, Milton uses the first couple to show that, as he writes in *Tetrachordon*, there are “singular and substantial differences of every soul,” and that couples are to some degree always apart, even while in the presence of one another (*YP* 2, 606). In this way, the poet builds on the work of a diverse range

of writers, including Montaigne (“real solitude [...] may be enjoyed in the midst of cities and the courts of kings” even if it “is best enjoyed alone”), Francis Bacon (“little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth[,] For a crowd is not company”), and Robert Burton, who diagnoses his entire generation as one affected by solitude, among others (Montaigne, 176; Bacon, 37). Opposite these texts, though, which often deal in platitudes, Milton’s poem is a dynamic and evolving system, where solitary figures interact and respond to one another, all the while preserving their essential difference.<sup>6</sup>

Adam and Eve try to establish this fit society of solitary members in Eden, and eventually they succeed, though only after it is too late. Leaving paradise, the narrator describes how they “hand in hand with wandering steps and slow, / Through Eden took their solitary way,” a way that is solitary because, anatomically, clasped hands originate on opposite sides of the body, and interfacing palms meet at perpendicular angles, suggesting likeness through difference, society through singularity (12.648-649). This is precisely the sort of society that John Rumrich denies as a possibility in *Matter of Glory* when writing that, during the separation scene, “One of them must get his or her way—they cannot both stay together and be apart” (124). But perhaps they *can* “stay together and be apart,” or else be apart physically and still “get his or her way” by agreeing to disagree, to be together in and through their mutual commitment to difference. Much depends, then, on how we read the separation scene, in which Adam and Eve set out to debate the role of solitude within their marriage, a process that likewise finds them holding hands (“from her husband’s hand her hand / Soft she withdrew”) (9.385-386). Referring to this scene, Mary Beth Long argues that “Adam considers solitude a test he has already endured, while Eve thinks of it as a privilege she has yet to attain” (106). Though he has “already endured” physical solitude, Adam seems unable to endure it any longer, as he tries and fails to persuade Eve to keep

their differences between them. “[T]rial choose / With me, best witness of thy virtue tried,” he tells her, attempting to convince her that he represents the differential ideal, not Satan (9.316-317). Not only does Adam fail to persuade Eve, however, he ultimately consents to her choice, even commanding her to “Go,” not once, but twice (9.372-373). That Adam fails because he appeals to Eve as an authority figure, thereby disrupting the harmonious balance of a marital conversation that depends on differences of mind, we eventually learn from the Son, who arrives in Book 10 to pass judgment on the couple. “Was she thy God?” he asks Adam, in a question that applies as much to the consent he gives prior to her departure as it does to his decision to partake of the fruit (10.145). During his previous solitary conversation with God, an authority figure if ever there was one, Adam maintains his composure, logically arguing for and receiving a mate whose difference from him is like his difference from her. When that very same mate argues with him in favor of physical solitude as a way to test those differences, though, Adam falters mid-conversation, agreeing with Eve’s decision to leave not based on the merits of her argument, with which he clearly disagrees, but simply owing to the fact that she is his wife.

In *Milton’s Eve*, Diane McColley argues that Adam’s “final speech changes direction” because he “finds in his own word ‘obedience’ illumination for his rapidly working mind and comprehends what true obedience is” (181). The obedience to which McColley refers here is the obedience of Eve. *She* must prove her constancy to God while away from Adam, and, finally realizing this fact, Adam instantly (some might argue overhastily) insists that she go. McColley defends this reading by suggesting that Adam’s “rapidly working mind” “incorporates” Eve’s logic into his own argument, an “integration” that shows his acumen as a critical thinker (180-181).<sup>7</sup> Her argument thus seems to imply that the ideal conversation for Milton consists in sameness of mind, as Adam recognizes his mistake, and, agreeing to Eve’s decision, he actually

integrates his thought into hers. Adam thinks quickly only, it seems, to realize he must think more slowly, like Eve. Is Adam's consent an instance of "integration," though, or is it more along the lines of acquiescence? Moreover, should sameness of mind be the conversational goal in Eden, or perhaps likeness through difference, unity through singularity? Though McColley acknowledges that, "On the whole, singular virtue is commended in the poem," her argument clearly privileges Eve's singleness over Adam's at this moment (173). Eve gets her solitude; meanwhile, Adam "incorporates" himself, at least discursively, into her line of thinking. I will save the discussion of Eve's desire for solitude for another chapter. Now, I wish to focus on Adam's consent, contrasting his audacity before God in Book 8 with his acquiescent attitude toward Eve prior to her departure. As the Son's admonishment reveals, Adam is in some ways *worse* than those who "beleeve things only because his Pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason" (*YP* 2, 543). He *does* have "other reason" for denying Eve, yet gives her permission anyway. Make no mistake: I am not suggesting that Adam should turn contrarian, adopting disagreeable beliefs simply for argument's sake. Until the moment he tells her to go, however, Adam *does* evince real and pressing concerns about Eve's departure. Whether he is right or wrong about those convictions is less important than the fact that he genuinely believes them. Why he renounces those beliefs, as well as the effect of that renunciation, will be the subject of discussion in the pages that follow. I argue that Milton is not interested in human equality per se, at least insofar as equality implies sameness, but instead what James Grantham Turner labels a "vision of equality-in-difference," which has the advantage of perpetuating solitude, even within marriage itself (280).<sup>8</sup>

## I.

Adam's humanness develops out of his attunement to animal otherness, a process that begins shortly after God places him in solitude.<sup>9</sup> To explain this development, I integrate into my analysis aspects of Agamben's *The Open*, an exegesis of Heidegger's theory of animality. Much as Heidegger did before him, Agamben identifies humanness as consisting of different stages of profound boredom. Though Adam temporarily enjoys an animal existence, as indicated through his description of how he "gazed" at the "ample sky," then "By quick instinctive motion" stood up, "thitherward endeavoring," implying a birdlike ambition, nevertheless, this happiness quickly turns to despair, and despair gives way to boredom (8.258-260). As this youthfulness exuberance subsides, and Adam begins to recognize his difference from the sun, the earth, the hills and dales, rivers, woods, plains, and the other fair creatures, he starts to question himself, leading to the first-ever existential crisis:

But who I was, or where, or from what cause,  
 Knew not; to speak I tried, and forthwith spake,  
 My tongue obeyed and readily could name  
 Whate'er I saw. Thou sun, said I, fair light  
 And thou enlightened earth, so fresh and gay,  
 Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,  
 And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,  
 Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?  
 Not of myself; by some great maker then,  
 In goodness and in power pre-eminent;  
 Tell me, how may I know him, how adore,  
 From whom I have that thus I move and live,

And feel that I am happier than I know.  
 While I thus called, and strayed I knew not whither,  
 From where I first drew air, and first beheld  
 This happy light, *when answer none returned,*  
 On a green shady bank profuse of flowers  
 Pensive I sat me down; there gentle sleep  
 First found me, and with soft oppression seized  
 My drowsed sense, untroubled, though I thought  
 I then was passing to my former state  
 Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve. (270-291, my italics)

In the twenty-one lines of poetry cited here, the first-person singular pronoun “I” appears sixteen times. Twice during the first six of these lines the pronoun “I” directly contrasts with the deictic “thou,” as in “thou sun” and “thou enlightened earth,” indicating a nascent I-Thou relationship, a fact Thomas Luxon also notices (102). Here, Adam recounts to Raphael his trouble in separating himself from his environment using language resembling that struggle. As Adam relates how he became more aware of his own subjectivity, the frequency of the first-person pronoun increases, until, at last, a frustrated Adam gives up his attempt to commune with nature “when answer none returned.” Rather than delight, as Diane McColley suggests in her article on Edenic creatureliness, Adam’s initial encounter with the creaturely world manifests a complete lack of interest that results in ennui, a difficult but necessary phase on the way to humanness (61). Explicating Heidegger’s most important term, Agamben writes that “Dasein is simply an animal that has learned to become bored,” an education that animals simply cannot receive (70). While the animal is in the world, it cannot comport itself to its *being-in* the world, and therefore it

lingers in a doubly closed off space, suspended between itself and its environment, while unopened to either of those realities (54). Meanwhile, the human learns to recognize its unopenedness during profound boredom, which Heidegger styles “that *solitariness* in which each human being first of all enters into a nearness to what is essential in all things, a nearness to world” (8). This is the solitariness that Adam begins to recognize after the creatures “answer none returned.”

Despite its importance in activating his humanness, ultimately this version of solitude-as-boredom proves unsustainable. Knowing this, God quickly intervenes. As Adam lingers between the human and animal worlds, bored by the latter, yet not fully occupying the former, God places Adam in a trace-like state. “[S]uddenly,” he says, there “stood at my head a dream”

Whose inward apparition gently moved  
 My fancy to believe I yet had being,  
 And lived: one came, methought, of shape divine,  
 And said, Thy mansion wants thee, Adam, rise,  
 First man, of men innumerable ordained  
 First father, called by thee I come thy guide  
 To the garden of bliss, thy seat prepared.  
 So saying, by the hand he took me raised,  
 And over the fields and waters, as in air  
 Smooth sliding without step, last led me up  
 A woody mountain; whose high top was plain,  
 A circuit wide, enclosed, with goodliest trees  
 Planted, with walks, and bowers, that what I saw

Of earth before scarce pleasant seemed. (292-306)

Commanding him to “rise,” for his “Mansion wants thee,” God effectively prevents Adam from reverting to his previous animalism. In Adam’s recasting, God functions as a “disinhibitor,” which, Agamben writes, deactivates the not-open by revealing it as such, a circular process, insofar as the disinhibitor is also revealed through this deactivation. While Adam begins to realize the animal world is not open to him once he enters his pensive state, it is not until God becomes apparent *as* a disinhibitor that Adam concludes his anthropogenesis.<sup>10</sup> With God revealed to him as such, Adam explains to Raphael how he “named” the animals “as they passed, and understood / Their nature, with such knowledge God endued / My sudden apprehension: but in these I found not what methought I wanted still” (352-355). If the first stage of Adam’s profound boredom commences “when answer none returned,” and the second stage begins when he pensively retires to the shady embankment, then the third and final stage of bored solitude occurs once God “endued” Adam with the “sudden apprehension” that allowed him to understand the animal’s “nature” as a closing off.

Profoundly bored by the surrounding creatures, whose difference from him he just now understands as difference, Adam next tries to converse with God. Whereas the creatures bore Adam, God completely overwhelms the first man. As Luxon astutely observes,

Conversation with God could make Adam even more godlike, but in the end friendship with God the Father is out of the question, even though Milton fancies that Adam conversed at length with God and together they made a new being, a woman to be Adam’s proper friend. God does not need a friend, so the two cannot get the same things from each other as friendship requires; they are hopelessly unequal. Until Adam lives in

heaven, he cannot live with God; besides, carrying on a conversation with God appears to overwhelm Adam. (113)

Luxon is right to point out that God is “hopelessly unequal.” At the same time, I question what it means to be Adam’s “proper friend.” According to Luxon, who locates Aristotle in Milton’s thinking on friendship, a proper friend is a friend of likeness, and God cannot be a proper friend because he is so different. Though I agree about God’s radical difference, I hesitate to say that the ideal friendship for Milton is one of equality, assuming equality implies likeness. If Eve makes an ideal companion, it is because she is *hopefully* unequal, in contrast to God, who is “*hopelessly* unequal.” The problem for Adam is not difference itself, but that God is too different, his alterity too great for Adam to comprehend. Meanwhile, Eve is perfectly different. If not for reasons of difference, why else would God make them in such a way that “He [is] for God only, she for God in him” (4.299)? This basic dissimilitude suggests that Milton’s understanding of friendship is not based in likeness, but in difference, though, to be sure, difference within reason. God’s difference is extrarational, the creatures’ difference is irrational, while Adam and Eve’s difference is perfectly rational, which is what allows them to recognize and respond to their difference from each other.

Eve’s difference from Adam also means that his solitude does not end with her creation; rather, it continues into their marriage. Though it might seem counterintuitive, this understanding of marriage helps explain both the importance of the separation scene, as well as the final image of the text, in which the couple makes their solitary exit out of paradise. Unlike Aristotle’s notion of friendship based in likeness, Milton conceives of friendship, for which Puritan marriage is the ideal, as involving two people “most resembling unlikeness and most unlike resemblance.”

When God tells Adam that he

Knew it not good for man to be alone,  
 And no such company as then thou sawst  
 Intended thee, for trial only brought,  
 To see how thou couldst judge of fit and meet:  
 What next I bring shall please thee, be assured,  
 Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,  
 Thy wish, exactly to thy heart's desire (8.445-451)

we must read his lines within a general understanding of Milton's notion of friendship-as-difference. Eve's "likeness" to Adam actually consists, paradoxically, in her "most resembling unlikeness," which has the effect of proliferating difference, thereby prolonging solitude. To rephrase God's edict, then, it is "not good for man to be alone" *by himself*. Adam is not capable of living like God, "alone / From all eternity" (8.405-407). Adam needs a mate whose difference from him resembles (is "like") his difference from her, and in that way they are alike through their difference from one another. The "single imperfection" that Adam laments is not solitude per se, but a solitude that is so radically different from the solitudes of beast and God that it confounds thought. Adam needs a companion who can help him contemplate what it means to be alone, though without giving up that aloneness, and Eve is that person. Initially, Adam seems to mistake Eve for another version of himself. Enthralled by her new presence, Adam declares, "I now see / Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, myself / Before me" (8.494-496). As God states, however, Adam is able to "judge of fit and meet," and eventually he revises this initial assessment, claiming "her the inferior, in the mind / And outward also her resembling less / His image who made both" (8.541-544). Nor are these gender differences, outward and inward, faults of nature. "Accuse not nature," Raphael admonishes Adam, advising him to "weigh with

her thyself,” and also that love “hath his seat / In reason, and is judicious, [and] is the scale / By which to heavenly love thou mayst ascend” (8.561; 570; 590-592). Using metaphors of “weight” and “scale,” Raphael has to remind Adam that Eve is different, but that this difference is entirely necessary, lest he return to a beastlike state, “sunk in carnal pleasure” (8.593).

Adam’s difference from Eve, then, depends upon an even greater difference between human and animal, and it is this latter difference that informs Milton’s reasoning for divorce, as well as his vitriolic response to the “swainish” respondent to his divorce tracts. As Julia Lupton appositely remarks, “To be single, without a helpmeet (either outside marriage or within an unhappy one), is for Milton the sign of an unfinished or decompleted creature” (186). If solitary Adam ascends toward godliness but stops at humanness, the unhappily married spouse, also described as solitary, descends from humanness to a state of absolute beastliness. This is the same solitude Adam initially experiences, which foments his existential crisis. On the verge of returning to the beastly state from which he just emerged, Adam would have persisted in this condition, were it not for the disinhibiting presence of God, whose intervention completes his humanness. While Adam narrowly avoids returning to a state of beastliness, Milton worries that an unhappily married spouse might not be so lucky, believing such a person might actually revert to a beast. Thus, he emphasizes a marriage of minds of “unlike resemblance,” whose difference prevents the marriage from becoming one wherein the only dissimilarity is bodily, leading to animal lusting. There must be difference of thought and opinion, not simply difference of sexual organs. Milton argues passionately, if perhaps incorrectly, that God ordained marriage not to assuage “meer motion of carnall lust” or “the meer goad of a sensitive desire,” since “God does not principally take care for such cattel” (*YP* 2, 251). In place of the more conventional reading of Pauline doctrine, Milton maintains that

mariage is a human society, and that all human society must proceed from the mind rather than the body, els it would be but a kind of animal or beastish meeting; if the mind therefore cannot have that due company by mariage, that it may reasonably and humanly desire, that mariage can be no human society, but a certain formalitie, or gilding over of little better then a brutish congresse, and so in very wisdom and purenes to be dissolv'd. (YP 2, 275)

Already more than a metaphor, the language of “kind” will eventually give way to language of animal equivalence. “Since wee know it is not the joyning of another body will remove lonelines, but the uniting of another compliable mind,” Milton writes in *The Doctrine*, it will therefore be “no blessing but a torment, nay a base and brutish condition to be one flesh, unlesse where nature can in some measure fix a unity of disposition” (YP 2, 327). Many would “regain from [this] dissolute and brutish licence,” Milton insists, if divorce were permitted (355). Instances such as these—and many more occur in *Tetrachordon* and *Colasterion*—attest to the fact that Milton does not merely use animals analogously; he actually believes humans will become beasts in a bad marriage.<sup>11</sup>

Similar references to brute conjugality appear in Erasmus’s marriage colloquies, though in service of defending marriage against divorce. While in *The Godly Feast*, Erasmus, through the voice of Timothy, blames the husband for a failed marriage (“Often it’s our own fault that our wives are bad, either because we choose bad ones or make them such, or don’t train and control them as we should”), his other colloquies are more critical of the shrewish wife for a marriage gone wrong (187).<sup>12</sup> In *Marriage*, for instance, Eulalia tells her friend, Xanthippe, the stock termagant, that “As a mirror, if it’s a good one, always gives back the image of the person looking at it, so should a wife reflect her husband’s mood, not being gay when he’s sad or merry

when he's upset" (313). However, Xanthippe refuses to forgive her husband, lambasting his behavior as "too savage," claiming she would prefer to "sleep with a brood-sow than with such a husband" (317, 310). Acknowledging that divorce used to be "a remedy for irreconcilable differences," Eulalia nevertheless observes it "has been entirely abolished," essentially telling Xanthippe that she must remain with her husband, even though he acts like, and possibly is, an animal (311). Whereas Erasmus maintains the institution of marriage even in the case of a husband who shows signs of beastliness, Milton argues that such beastly behavior contradicts the purpose for which marriage was first decreed, in effect, siding with Xanthippe.

By a "desire and longing" emplaced within him by God, Adam "put off an unkindly solitarines" through "the cheerfull society of wedlock," Milton writes in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (YP 2, 251). The word "unkindly," evocative of the unnatural, again establishes a link between the animal and the unhappy spouse, who will return to this "unkindly" state without the ability to divorce. Whereas Adam evolved from an animalistic state to his present humanness through God's disinhibiting grace, ultimately declaring his desire for a mate, the unhappily married person, already having desired a mate but ending up with an incompatible one, loses his or her humanity, forced to persist in an "unkindly solitarines." The only way out of this predicament is through divorce, since "the solitarines of [an unhappily married] man [...] hath no remedy, but lies under a worse condition then the loneliest single life; for in single life the absence and remoteness of a helper might inure him to expect his own comforts out of himselfe, or to seek with hope" (YP 2, 246-247). Seek with hope, yes, but for what? I contend that Milton hopes for someone different not only in body, but also in mind, whose inherent inequality will prolong solitude within marriage, alongside a helpmeet. This is the very person Adam receives in the form of Eve. Their differences, both physical and mental, are not at issue;

in fact, they are the positive sign of a healthy relationship, which, for Milton, always involves difference, and ultimately solitude. Returning to *Paradise Lost*, we will see that Adam seems to forget this fact the day Eve requests leave from him to work alone. While her rationale for leaving is important, my focus here is primarily on Adam's reaction to that decision. Until he agrees to let her leave, Adam and Eve exemplify the perfect married couple, challenging each other, and through that challenge guaranteeing solitude's continuation. They are different, and this difference is a sign and surety of their solitudes. By agreeing to let her go, though, Adam proves himself too much of "like" mind, thus decreasing his solitude. Ironically, his agreeing to her solitude is a diminution of his own.

## II.

The scene is a familiar one. A couple working together begin to bicker, and that bickering turns into a full-on argument. Yet, in this case, the couple consists of the ideal man and woman, and the argument takes place in a paradise made specifically for them. Some might find this situation odd, given that paradise would seem to signify harmony, not the sort of disunity we find in Adam and Eve's dispute. For Milton, however, conflict is not something to be avoided; his perfect mate is not weak of will, but rather someone with whom he can meaningfully debate. Perhaps unsurprisingly, their first debate in paradise concerns solitude itself. "Let us divide our labours," Eve tells Adam, attempting to make literal/physical a division that already exists between them mentally (9.214). Her desire for geographic solitude is an outward expression of an inward disposition; she is already alone in her mind, but feels as though a physical separation might also benefit them, allowing them to ramp up production in the garden. Responding to her request, Adam does not debate her leaving on principle, even admitting that "solitude sometimes

is best society” (9.249). He recognizes the importance of physical solitude, which, it should be noted, Eve has already experienced on numerous previous occasions. Besides her initial solitude at the lake, she also tends to her nursery alone, gathers fruits for Adam and Raphael, and eavesdrops on their conversation from behind a “shady nook” (9.277). If Adam is opposed to her most recent bid for solitude, it is not on ideological grounds, but for reasons more specific. Believing her time spent alone poses a real threat to her virtue, Adam models a cruder version of an argument that has been adopted recently by certain American politicians, who seek to prevent rape by arguing that women should “avoid / The attempt itself” (9.294-295). We need not agree with Adam’s reasoning at this moment, any more than we need to agree with Eve’s request for time away from Adam. Of greater importance is the fact that they debate at all. Initiating this debate, Eve embodies the very independence she seeks from Adam through argumentation, an irony apparently lost on her. As Milton so eloquently states in *Areopagitica*, “that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary” (*YP* 2, 515). Focused on trials to come, Eve temporarily forgets that the present debate is its own form of trial, the contrariness of their individual wills a test of their purity. Stanley Fish remarks in *How Milton Works* that “In the course of answering the question of what it means to garden, they garden themselves—that is, they encourage and/or retard the growth of the thoughts by which their situation in all of its aspects is conceived” (530). For Fish, this means “to grow in the exercise of obedience by discerning its imperatives in a number of situations,” the present one included (532). I, too, find the separation scene to be one of self-cultivation, though the model of growth Milton has in mind is supplied by Raphael, whose description of spiritual growth explains how “from the root / Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves, / More aerie, last the bright consummate floure / Spirits odorous breathes” (5.472-482). Phrased with similar verdancy in *Areopagitica*,

the image becomes the “firm root, out of which we all grow, though into branches” (*YP* 2, 556).

In other words, spiritual growth entails a process of diversification, as each branch grows up next to and apart from those around it, creating unity of the whole plant through division of its branches.

Though not at first, Adam eventually recognizes this fact, and so attempts to shift the locus of her desired trial from further afield to right next to him, commanding her to “trial choose / With me, best witness of thy virtue tried” (9.316-317). Adam sees in Eve a potentially wayward branch, and, as such, the topiarian within him tries to bend her will back towards him, that they might grow alongside each other, though still apart. In the same way that God tested Adam, whose solitude “for trial only brought,” Adam tries to convince Eve that her solitude is best tested with him, during the present “trial” of their debate (8.447). Unlike Adam, however, whose solitude was tested in God’s presence, Eve seeks her solitary trial away from Adam. This desired relocation effectively sidesteps Adam, her differential ideal, and thus the perfect witness of her solitude, a movement that also disrupts the Miltonic logic of “He for God only, she for God in him.” Much as Adam’s solitary conversation with God found him “Expressing well the spirit within [him] free,” he expects Eve to express a similarly self-assertive attitude in *his* presence, during the present trial of their conversation (8.440). Less experienced than Adam, though, Eve desires to test her solitude at a distance. The problem, then, concerns how Adam can persuade Eve to test her solitude in his presence, and to do so without coercion. To force Eve to test her solitude in his presence defeats the entire purpose of Miltonic solitude, which involves freely asserting oneself, “Expressing well the spirit within thee free.” Adam must convince Eve to test her solitude in his presence in such a way that her solitude is not compromised in the process. Milton himself was quite familiar with the rhetorical dilemma surrounding this version of

persuasion. In his prose tracts, he seeks an audience at once skeptical and convincible of his argumentative claims. Lacking skepticism, his readers might accept his arguments unquestioningly, exposing them to brainwashing. Yet, Milton still needs a convincible readership. If his readers prove too intransigent, then he lacks a reason to write altogether. Rhetorically, then, Milton's aim must be to convince his prose readers to convince themselves of the veracity of his claims. His "fit audience" is one receptive to his arguments, though still discriminating. In other words, he seeks solitary readers capable of independent decision. While he supplies the argument, his readers must decide *on their own* the truthfulness of his words, or else risk believing him for the wrong reason, turning polemic into propaganda, persuasion into brainwashing.

Adam encounters a similar rhetorical dilemma during his debate with Eve. He must convince her that he is her "fit audience," the "best witness" of her solitary trial, thus "find[ing] a way out of the command/permission dichotomy that has entered the conversation," in the words of Joan Bennett (114). Support for this understanding of solitary debate emerges at crucial moments in Milton's divorce tracts, as well. Besides openly admitting that God's edict against aloneness "holds not always," Milton also tacitly argues for a marriage based on likeness of mind that still admits of individual difference (*YP* 2, 605). These differences are necessary to prevent a marriage of complete conformity, wherein two minds become indistinguishably one, thereby inhibiting the free agency of one or both parties. Despite his unwavering insistence that marriage consists in likeness of mind, Milton also claims that a good marriage occurs between two people "different [in] sexe, [that] in most resembling unlikenes, and most unlike resemblance cannot but please best and be pleas'd in the aptitude of that variety" (*YP* 2, 597). In passages such as this one, readers are made to realize that, for Milton, likeness of mind is decidedly *not* sameness of

mind, and that difference remains an important element of the marital arrangement. While the “unity of minde is neerer and greater then the union of bodies,” nevertheless, it is still only “neerer,” not the exact same, and nor should it ever be the same, according to Milton (*YP 2*, 606). Still, his insistence on both likeness and difference in marriage, society and solitude, raises some interesting questions. If a “meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and the noblest end of marriage,” and marriage itself involves partners “most resembling unlikeness,” then exactly what does that conversation involve, and, moreover, how (and to what degree) does it permit differences of mind (*YP 2*, 246)? These questions are further compounded by Milton’s conspicuous reticence over their answers. In *Colasterion*, for instance, he vilifies the anonymous respondent to his divorce tracts for even asking them. Defending his claim that a good marriage consists in “pleasing conversation,” Milton vehemently rebukes his anonymous opponent for claiming not to know what conversation means, arguing that “if ignoble and swainish mindes cannot apprehend” what he means by the term, then clearly that person is in no position to understand the meaning of a good marriage (*YP 2*, 246; 740).

Yet, I would argue Milton *does* provide an answer regarding what makes for “pleasing conversation,” just not directly. Instead, he models the pleasing conversation of a good marriage in the divorce tracts themselves through his engagement with an imagined audience that he assumes to be ideologically different than himself. Whereas *Colasterion* finds Milton locked in debate with a churlish and cretinous man, thus demonstrating what a bad marriage of mismatched minds looks like, a point convincingly articulated by Thomas Luxon in *Single Imperfection*, his other divorce tracts appeal to the consciences of those whose disagreement with him does not for that reason prevent them from engaging in the act of debate (68). However, such a conversation presupposes, and in many ways even depends upon, the inherent differences

of the interlocutors, which Milton implicitly acknowledges when describing himself at the start of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* as the “the sole advocate of a discount’nanc’t truth,” emphasis here on “sole” (*YP* 2, 224). A little later in the exordium, Milton vacillates between standing apart from the crowd to whom his doctrine is addressed and fully identifying himself with them, a tension registered through the alternating third-person singular (“he”) and first-person plural (“us”) pronouns:

He therefore who by adventuring shall be so happy as with successe to ease & set free the minds of ingenuous and apprehensive men from this needlesse thraldome, he that can prove it lawfull and just to claime the performance of a fit and matchable conversation, [...] *he that can but lend us* the clue that windes out this labyrinth of servitude to such a reasonable and expedient liberty as this, deserves [...] to be reck’n’d among the publick benefactors of civill and humane life; above the inventors of wine and oyle. (*YP* 2, 240, my italics).

Imploring those “minded to judge hardly” to “be still and heare all out, nor think it equall to answer deliberate reason with sudden heat and noise,” Milton asks his audience to remember that “many truths now of reverend esteem and credit, had their birth and beginning once from singular and private thoughts; [...] and had the fate at first to be generally exploded and exclaim’d on by many violent opposers” (*YP* 2, 240). Rhetorically, then, Milton assumes from the outset an incredulous audience, but an audience whose powers of judgment enable them to decide for themselves—and *by* themselves—the tenability of the ensuing discourse. Milton’s ideal audience, then, like his ideal spouse, resides somewhere between those entirely unfit for conversation, such as the churlish respondent of *Colasterion*, and those who would consent to an argument through an appeal to authority, such as people who “beleev things only because his

Pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determins, without knowing other reason” (*YP* 2, 543). In short, the pleasing conversation of a good marriage resembles the pleasing conversation of polemic insofar as both involve differences of mind, differences that in a certain way protect the solitudes of those participating in it.

Not only does Adam fail in this form of conversation, but he also succumbs to the very conformity he hopes to avoid imposing on Eve, “end[ing] the deliberation by acquiescing, out of his passion for Eve, to their separation” (Bennett, 155).<sup>13</sup> Though he disagrees with her reasoning, he ends up consenting to it anyway. In an odd shift, Adam proves himself a poor witness of trial during the very conversation in which he tries to persuade Eve he is the “best witness” of her trial, which only reinforces Eve’s initial decision to leave. Verbally, Adam begins to falter the moment love turns into conformity: “Not then mistrust, tender love enjoins, / That I should mind thee oft, and mind thou me” (9.357-358). The verb “mind” has a number of possible meanings, but concomitant with the verb “enjoins,” we can assume its primary use in this context is to denote obedience. This reading finds further evidence a few lines later, when Adam exhorts Eve to “approve thy constancy” by “approv[ing] / First thy obedience” to him (9.367-368). In other words, the conversation no longer involves marshaling evidence for and against Eve’s departure. Rather, the discussion becomes a contest of wills, which assumes in advance that one of them must ultimately comply with the other, ending in conformity. Adam shifts the terms of the debate, which now concerns whom will capitulate first, him or her. Though Adam insists that Eve comply with his will, in reality, he is the one that assents to her reasoning. Exasperated, he finally commands her to leave:

But if thou think, trial unsought may find

Us both securer than thus warned thou seemst,

Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more;  
 Go in thy native innocence, rely  
 On what thou hast of virtue, summon all,  
 For God towards thee hath done his part, do thine. (9.370-375)

Employing a number of imperatives, Adam commands Eve to leave him, telling her to “Go,” to “rely,” to “summon,” and, finally, to “do” her part in protecting herself against potential threats. These imperatives give the illusion that Adam has retained power over the situation, and in some ways he still maintains control. Yet, in a larger sense, Adam loses power at this argumentative juncture. His belief that involuntary companionship (“thy stay, not free, absents thee more”) will create *more* solitude between them, and, correspondingly, that Eve’s departure will render them *less* alone, and thus more like each other, falsely assumes that conformity should be the end goal of marriage, that togetherness necessarily involves compliance. If compliance is the argumentative objective, however, then it only matters to be seen which side will comply with the other, and, in this case, that person is Adam. Though he frames it as a command, Adam’s final argument is derivative of Eve’s initial desire, as he tries to pass off (or integrate, to use McColley’s word) as his own idea the very argument that he receives from her.

As readers of the debate scene, our first inclination might be to speculate about how Adam might have acted differently in order to avoid this turn to conformist rhetoric. Should he have continued the debate to the point of complete exhaustion? At what point is it acceptable to concede defeat? These questions themselves provide their own answers, however, insofar as they, too, assume conversation is a contest of wills, in which struggle finally gives way to victory for one side. In other words, Adam’s failure is not his concession, but the shift he initiates in the conversational ethos that makes the idea of concession seem like a rational choice. Rather than a

piecemeal truth that proceeds in fits and starts, whose discontinuous temporal unfolding eventually yields a final form that might be likened to the “gracefull symmetry” of a church constructed of irregular blocks, as described by Milton in *Areopagitica*, or else a mature tree, whose branches, though growing in different directions, and to different lengths, still manage to create a pleasing gestalt, Adam instead chooses to endorse a version of truth whose emphasis on immediate results forecloses conversation, which now concerns who is right, and who wrong, who has “the” truth, and who does not. From this perspective, Adam’s concession, though still not appropriate, at least makes some sense. If truth is a thing to own, and if Adam, in the end, feels he is its owner, then his resignation is no different than the businessman, who, trying to sell his wares, ultimately loses the sale, or the doctor, who, believing he has the proper prescription, encounters an uncooperative patient, who refuses the medication. His changed perspective on the nature of truth makes it seem like he has no choice but to give up.

That Adam does *not* initially or always think this way we gather from his claim that “from the influence of [Eve’s] looks” he “receive[s] / Access in every virtue, in thy sight / More wise, more watchful, stronger, if need were / Of outward strength” (9.309-312). Derivative of neo-Platonic conceptions of love, in which the beloved’s presence motivated the lover—in this case, Adam—to become “More wise, more watchful, stronger,” the version of “influence” Milton poeticizes here also departs from his predecessors to the extent that Eve’s stay is not meant to alleviate conflict, but incite it (“trial choose / With me”). The point of this trial is not to be right, if by “right” we mean unilaterally imposing one’s will, nor is the goal to submit to another’s reasoning, as Adam does when he tells Eve to go “if thou think, trial unsought may find / Us both securer than thus warned thou seemst.” The conditional “if” of the opening phrase “if thou think” renders Adam’s subsequent imperative, in which he tells Eve to “Go,” dependent

on *her* argumentative reasoning, not his, while still registering his continuing uncertainty about her convictions. Instead of agreeing to disagree, Adam does the exact opposite, disagreeing with Eve for fifty lines of the poem, only to agree against his will to her desired departure in the last five lines of their conversation.

Adam's conformist rhetoric redoubles upon seeing fallen Eve. Encountering his wife for the first time after she has eaten the fruit, he experiences another existential crisis, similar to the one he experienced prior to her creation. "How can I live without thee," he exclaims, "how forgo / Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined, / To live again in these wild woods forlorn" (9.908-910)? Adam feels that Eve's fall and subsequent transformation has rendered her too different, too knowledgeable, and thus too much like God, whose solitude overwhelmed him. He believes—perhaps correctly—that he must now give up their "sweet converse," the same way he had to end his converse with God, whose difference completely overpowered him. This is a real and pressing concern, though one that Adam will rather quickly move past. Worried about Eve's difference from him, and whether or not it is now too great for him to continue their "sweet converse," Adam unexpectedly reverses his position and begins emphasizing her sameness. No sooner has he raised the specter of her difference than he returns to the idea of exact equivalence when designating her "flesh of flesh, / Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state / Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe" (9.914-916). In other words, fallen Eve is simultaneously too different from Adam and too similar. Ultimately, however, his belief in their sameness succeeds, as he claims to feel

The bond of nature draw me to my own,  
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;  
Our state cannot be severed, we are one,

One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself. (9.955-959)

In the space of four lines, Adam manages entirely to disavow the foremost precept of Miltonic friendship, which is based in difference. Though he claims that “to lose thee were to lose myself,” it is clear that Adam has already lost his own sense of identity, which is now entirely subsumed within Eve’s, despite the fact that, only a moment ago, he claimed she newly represented a difference so profound it would necessarily foreclose their “sweet converse.” Contrary to what he believes, though, Adam cannot “be severed” from Eve precisely because that severance has already occurred, beginning the moment God extracted a rib from his side. Though made from the same fleshly material, they were made different people, in the same way that God divided “one first matter all” into “various forms, various degrees / Of substance” (5.472-474). In his present state of mind, however, they are self-identical, “one flesh,” both physically and mentally. If ever there was a “single imperfection,” this is it, as Adam passionately defends their relationship as consisting in Platonic unity. His passion for Eve at this moment overrides his more rational faculties. Inebriated, Eve fully supports his decision, encouraging him to indulge in the fruit. Adam eats, and she immediately celebrates this “glorious trial of exceeding love,” praising him for “engaging me to emulate” (9.961; 963). If difference is the sign of solitude, then emulation is the utmost sign of conformity, solitude’s opposite, and Adam’s current *modus operandi*. Eve’s characterization of this dramatic moment as a “trial of exceeding love” attempts to transform Miltonic trial from a solitary expression of individual will into an instance of emulation and self-negation.

As James Grantham Turner notes, Adam’s error might be as much the work of the poet as the first man. According to him, Milton problematizes Eros in *Paradise Lost* by unconsciously holding in tension two modes of understanding gender relations:

Milton has succeeded in bringing to life, in the *praxis* of his art, two quite different models of the politics of love: one is drawn from the experience of being in love with an equal, and the mutual surrender of ‘due benevolence’, the other from the hierarchical arrangement of the universe, and the craving for male supremacy. His treatment of Genesis stands out from all others because his imagination responds generously to both of these, to the ecstatic egalitarian love of ‘one flesh’ as well as to the patriarchal love of superior and inferior; he has hatched the contradictions in the text and the tradition that elsewhere lie dormant. (285)

The dichotomy Turner identifies between loves egalitarian and hierarchical is complicated, however, by the fact that, as I have argued repeatedly, egalitarianism for Milton involves the equal ability to be alone. Turner seems keenly aware of this predicament, as evident in his describing Milton’s mind as “respond[ing] generously to both” accounts of love. The situation is not a matter of choosing either egalitarianism or hierarchy, but rather concerns the tough task of finding likeness in difference, equality among unequals, something Adam either forgets or forgoes upon Eve’s return. His permissiveness weakens his solitude by manifesting his dependence on Eve, a dependency that is at once physical, emotional, and intellectual. While Eve’s decision making throughout Book 9 has its flaws, nevertheless, Adam fails at this epic juncture, first, by conceding the debate, and, later, by agreeing to “emulate” Eve by eating the fruit. Though occurring at different times, each of Adam’s decisions is motivated by the same underlying logic, which involves subordinating one’s will to the will of another.

Not long after ingesting the fruit, Adam will realize the error of his ways, and, fittingly, he seeks a return to solitude. Regaining his composure after a lust-filled act of sex, the very kind of animal sex Milton warns that a bad marriage will occasion, Adam cries out, exclaiming, “Oh

might I here / In solitude live savage, in some glade / Obscured” (9.1084-1086). Though it took him a while, Adam finally realizes that Miltonic humanness demands solitude, and that solitary relationships consist of some level of disunion, the bringing together of minds “most resembling unlikeness.” But it is too late. Rather than amicable disagreement, the marital ideal, the two instead spend the next few hours in “mutual accusation” (9.1187). When the Son finally appears to pass judgment on the couple, he states in no uncertain terms that Adam’s failure has to do with his disregard of difference. He failed to protect his solitude by heeding the dissimilitude between him and Eve:

Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey  
 Before his voice, or was she made thy guide,  
 Superior, or but equal, that to her  
 Thou didst resign thy manhood, and the place  
 Wherein God set thee above her made of thee,  
 And for thee, whose perfection far excelled  
 Hers in all real dignity[?] (10.145-151)

Adam has “resign[ed]” his “manhood,” a manhood that consists in the hierarchical “place / Wherein God set thee above her.” Though the Son seems to imply their equality (“or but equal”), the following lines clarify that he does not mean equality in the sense of sameness, but an equality of the sort Raphael suggests when discussing weights and scales, a balance that occurs through their differences from one another, one side more fit to lead, the other follow. Had Adam “known [himself] aright,” the Son goes on to say, he would have known it was his prerogative to “bear rule” over Eve, not her over him (10.155-156). Here, equality means the equal ability to be and think alone, which, for Adam, means alone and “above” Eve, who remains his inferior. The

Son's emphasis on "know[ing] aright" takes us right back to Adam's description of his original solitude, and God's claim that Adam "couldst judge of fit and meet" (8.448). Adam's initial solitude, God explains, prepared him to distinguish between himself and others, especially Eve, his "other self" (8.450). A sign of his alterity from beast and God, Adam's solitude provided him the education necessary to recognize differences great and small, an education that tragically fails him at the most crucial moment.

### Conclusion

Forced to leave paradise, the final image of the poem is one of a couple in solitude, alone and yet together, a befitting conclusion to a tragedy about the failure to proliferate difference within marriage:

The world was all before them, where to choose  
 Their place of rest, and providence their guide:  
 They hand in hand with wondering steps and slow,  
 Through Eden took their solitary way. (12.646-649)

This image—a couple "hand in hand" and yet "solitary"—tormented eighteenth-century critic Richard Bentley. Never of the mind to tolerate literary blunders, Bentley was not about to let his 1732 edition of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* end with, of all things, a contradiction. Frustrated by the thought of an Adam and Eve, who leave paradise both together *and* alone, Bentley famously emended the final lines of the poem to exclude that possibility. Under his care, the last lines read "Then hand in hand with *social* steps their way / Through Eden took, with heav'nly comfort cheer'd" (106). While Bentley defended his emendation as a necessary corrective against the faulty typography of an unreliable amanuensis, his reason for changing the lines

might have been as much personal as academic. In a sermon preached years earlier, Bentley expresses his belief that humans cannot be alone, since

Our Creator has implanted in mankind such appetites and inclinations, such as natural wants and exigencies, that they lead him spontaneously to the love of society and friendship, to the desire of government and community. Without society and government, man would be found in a worse condition than the very beasts of the field. (267)<sup>14</sup>

As an apparent contradiction, then, the final two lines of *Paradise Lost* directly conflicted with Bentley's ideological investment in a society without solitude. Channeling Aristotle, Bentley suggests that without society "man would be found in a worse condition than the very beasts of the field." Nor is Bentley the only critic to find the final lines of the poem troublesome. Another eighteenth-century critic, Joseph Addison, recommended the final two lines of the poem be expurgated entirely. These frustrations—of Bentley and Addison both—continue to haunt the scholarship of modern critics who assume that Milton's notion of society is one based in likeness and "heav'nly comfort," rather than a community founded in likeness through difference, and a God whose alterity renders him inconceivable. If, however, we understand that Milton's society is comprised of solitary individuals, each working alone and alongside one another, then the final lines make for an appropriate ending. Their leaving solitarily together is not a punishment, as indicated in the hopeful line "the world was all before them," but rather a renewed commitment to the principle of difference within marriage, as well as the ensuing solitudes that result from that inherent inequality.

### **Satanic Solitude in the Works of Hobbes and Milton**

In *Wayward Contracts*, Victoria Kahn writes that “Hobbes’s eloquence was almost always in the service of absolute obedience, [whereas] Milton’s imaginative energies were far more often engaged by breach of contract and dissent” (222). Building on Kahn’s work, this chapter examines how the political differences between Hobbes and Milton influence their disagreement over the role of solitude in political and spiritual life. As an exponent of absolute obedience, Hobbes declares solitude “an enemy” in *Philosophical Rudiments*, a position he maintains throughout his philosophical career (2: 2).<sup>1</sup> In his dualistic account, one chooses difference or sameness, solitude or society. His philosophy therefore depends on the very binaries that Milton’s poetry consistently disrupts. Whereas Hobbes seeks to elide individual difference through absolute conformity to the sovereign’s demand, Milton understands difference as a necessary component of life and a protection against conformity of will and world. Of course, the character of Satan significantly complicates this otherwise tidy distinction between philosopher and poet. Through his belief that the “mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven,” Satan introduces delusions into the world of Milton’s epic that A.B. Chambers rightly connects with “those phantasms of the mind” found in the philosophy of Hobbes (1.254-255; 101). Nor is this the only connection between Satan’s thinking and Hobbes’s state of nature. In *Leviathan*, for instance, Hobbes claims that

Nature hath made men so equal in the faculties of body and mind as that, though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together the difference between man and man is not so

considerable as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit to which another may not pretend as well as he. (3: 110)

Similarly, in his opening monologue, Satan argues that “furthest from him is best / Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme / Above his equals” (1.247-249). According to Satan, he and God would be perfect equals if not for the latter’s physical strength, an exception that recalls Hobbes’s stipulation that sometimes “there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another.” God is “Above” his hellish “equals” only in strength, not in reasoning, according to Satan. In his mind, their “difference [...] is not so considerable” that it should prevent the demons from again attempting to “try / Who is our equal” (5.866).

That Satan embodies many of the traits Hobbes assigns to humans in the “the war of every man against every man,” however, does not mean that Milton automatically follows Hobbes in condemning solitude as an “enemy,” any more than he completely endorses Hobbes’s notion of political conformity (3: 117). Rather, Milton strikes a balance between the radical individualism of Satan and the absolute obedience demanded by Hobbes’s philosophy, a balance perfected in the figure of Abdiel, whose “constant mind / Though single” shows him simultaneously committed to sameness and difference, society and solitude (5.902-903). Discussing Milton’s angelology, N.K. Sugimura initially argues that the action of Milton’s good angels “feels like some sort of charade,” since, according to her, they lack the “individuation” necessary to separate one angel’s deeds from another (192). No sooner has she made this distinction, however, than Sugimura begins to qualify it, admitting that Milton understood “the dangers inherent in depicting his good angels as omniform intellect,” and that, ultimately, the poet resists any easy “reconciliation between the Many and the One” (194). These “dangers” include the possibility of turning *omniformity* into *conformity*, thereby converting Milton’s community of

good angels into a commonwealth much like the one envisioned in Hobbes's *Leviathan*. In associating Satan with a conspicuously Hobbesian problem, it might seem as though Milton would likewise advocate Hobbes's authoritarian solution. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. Whereas Hobbes asks us to trade solitude for society, Milton proposes a version of angelic solitude *within* godly society itself. They might appear an undivided legion, but the first day of fighting finds Milton's good angels operating "single as in chief" (6.233).

Though Milton's Satan marks the endpoint of my analysis, the bulk of the chapter focuses on the philosophy of Hobbes, and in particular that telling passage from *De homine*, wherein he opines that "Truly the greatest" benefit of speech concerns the human ability to "command and understand commands,"

For without this [ability] there would be no society among men, no peace, and consequently no disciplines; *but first savagery, then solitude; and for dwellings, caves.*

For though among certain animals there are seeming polities, these are not of sufficiently great moment for living well; hence they merit not our consideration; and they are largely found among defenseless animals, not in need of many things, in which number man is not included; for just as swords and guns, the weapons of men, surpass the weapons of brute animals (horns, teeth, and stings), so man surpasses in rapacity and cruelty the wolves, bears, and snakes that are not rapacious unless hungry and not cruel unless provoked, whereas man is famished even by future hunger. From this it easily understood how much we owe to language, by which we, having been drawn together and agreeing to covenants, live securely, happily, and elegantly; we can so live, I insist, if we so will.

(39-40, my italics)

Using the Latin subjunctive verb *esset*, Hobbes here describes a hypothetical condition, in which there “would be no society,” but “first savagery, then solitude” without the ability to follow commands, and in particular he means the commands of the covenant established through the sovereign. Without referencing it directly, Hobbes implicitly relies on Aristotle’s beast/god formulation of solitude when imagining this return to a state of nature, a veiled allusion that will appear again in *Leviathan*. I am referring to Book 9 of *Politics*, wherein Aristotle describes the solitary person as “either a beast or a god” (1130). Though not mentioned overtly, Hobbes believes the only person capable of acting alone is the sovereign, whose solitude is godly, and whose commands we must therefore follow. Were it not for the godly solitude of the sovereign, then all would devolve into the beastly and troglodyte existence Hobbes details in *De homine*, whose description of natural “man” as “surpass[ing] in rapacity and cruelty the wolves, bears, and snakes” guarantees a miserable life outside the commonwealth.

Aristotle’s definition of solitude, in particular, the idea that the “natural outcast” is a “lover of war,” also resonates with Hobbes’s man in solitude. The quote from Homer’s *Iliad* that Aristotle employs to describe the solitary being—“Tribeless, lawless, hearthless one” (1129)—is tantamount to how Hobbes describes man’s natural condition in what he calls “the war of every man against every man” (3: 117). But Hobbes also departs from Aristotle’s teleological worldview and the idea that humans are born naturally fit for society, as Helen Thornton points out (54). Rather than posit solitude as the exception, as Aristotle does, Hobbes revises his definition, assuming solitude to be the natural condition of humans. Not just some, but *all* life, in Hobbes’s materialist view, is naturally solitary, and in an exclusively beastly way, as is apparent from the other adjectives he attaches to this condition: “poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (3: 113). While certain solitary individuals might imagine themselves as godlike—a “*Hercules or an*

*Alexander*,” in his words—their actions will necessarily be selfish and beastly (3: 6). The way to avoid such delusions of grandeur, in his opinion, involves the construction of Leviathan, an artificial apparatus created through social contract and managed by the sovereign.

Hobbes subtly imports Aristotle’s “beast or god” formulation to convince his readers that by supporting the godly solitude of the sovereign they are simultaneously preventing society from backsliding into beastly solitude, what contemporary philosopher Giorgio Agamben would call bare life, a condition of total bodily exposure. As a means to convince them of the advantages of sovereign rule, Hobbes describes beastly solitude in *Leviathan* and elsewhere as a nightmarish place characterized by an overactive imagination, in which a person might convince his or herself of godly qualities not actually in his or her possession. Beastly solitude, in other words, can deceive a person into believing that his or her solitude is actually godly, while simultaneously imperiling his or her body. Through this thought-experiment, wherein Hobbes and reader collaboratively imagine what they *might* imagine in solitude, Hobbes convinces the reader not only of what bare life looks like but also of the imagination’s ability to furnish an uncontested image of that debased condition. Hobbes’s description of solitude is therefore crucial to understanding the basis of his epistemological system, the imagination. If both the reader and Hobbes can agree about what a solitary person might imagine, then Hobbes already possesses the epistemological foundation his philosophy requires, which is itself based on an agreement about what the imagination is and does.

Hobbes consistently depicts the solitary individual throughout his works as a being turned away from society, indeed, selfish in disposition (2: 2). This belief in a solitude that denotes selfishness is not new. It can be found in works at least as old as Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis*, as well as numerous texts throughout the early modern period. However, Hobbes’s adoption of the

solitude-as-selfishness stance by necessity differs from that of other early modern writers because his political philosophy already assumes selfishness as the basis of all human action. The way we survive, according to Hobbes, is through constant vigilance over our own interests and ourselves. For this reason, Hobbes must prove why the particular version of selfishness that occurs in solitude is especially harmful to society, which he does by linking it to a perversion of the imagination. Solitude, for him, adversely impacts the proper workings of the human imagination, impeding action by frustrating a human's ability to discern fact from fiction. The better to understand the relationship between solitude and bare life, I begin with an analysis of Hobbesian reason, following that with a discussion of what he believes will happen to reason and the imagination while alone. During this latter section, I extend and complicate Christopher Scott McClure's claim that Hobbes's fear tactics are simply rhetorical. Unlike his discussion of hell, the focus of McClure's article, Hobbes's discussion of solitude goes well beyond rhetoric, performing a critical task in his epistemology relating to the imagination.

## I.

The one time Thomas Hobbes refers to John Milton by name, he disparages the poet for the execution of an argument, not of Charles. Rhetoric, not regicide, occupies Hobbes's thought when, in *Behemoth*, his fictional interlocutors begin discussing two treatises recently published in England: the first, Salmasius's Royalist apology, *Defensio Regia*, the second, Milton's antimonarchical rejoinder, *Defensio Populi Anglicani*. Upon hearing his friend mention the treatises, the second interlocutor affirms that he has "seen them both," claiming, "They are very good Latin both, and hardly to be judged which is better; and both ill reasoning, hardly to be judged which is worse; like two declamations, *pro* and *con*, made for exercise only in a rhetoric

school by one and the same man” (6: 368). More of a concern to Hobbes than the specifics of their “ill reasoning,” or so his fictional character would have us believe, is the fact that both documents, the *pro* and *con*, were “made [as though] for exercise only in a rhetoric school” and could have been written “by one and the same man.” This is the same man, Hobbes writes in *Leviathan*, who wishes to see his own private reason made universal law. If unchecked, this same man, he explains, will surely introduce “as much contradiction in the laws as there is in the Schools” (3: 256). While his immediate goal in the passage from *Behemoth* involves rebuking Milton and Salmasius for their schoolboy antics, Hobbes cleverly invokes *Leviathan* to accomplish this task, proving that, in the Hobbesian world, rhetoric and regicide, school and law, are never too far apart.

Hobbes intentionally likens the Republican Milton to the Royalist Salmasius in *Behemoth* because doing so allows him to dismiss both their arguments simultaneously from a rhetorical position beyond them. Like the sovereign he wishes to enthrone, Hobbes himself comes to resemble the person of “right reason,” who alone acts as “arbitrator or judge to whose sentence they will both stand,” as he states in an early passage from *Leviathan* (3: 31). If only for a moment, Hobbes, through the voice of his character, adopts the trappings of a sovereign, using the fictional setting of the dialogue to enact in microcosm the tenets of the commonwealth he so desires. Unlike Milton and Salmasius, whose arguments rely on the private passions within, Hobbes, the arbiter, assesses arguments publicly, according to precepts available to all reasonable creatures, while retaining his power to “judge of what opinions and doctrines [are] averse, and what conducing, to peace” in the commonwealth (3: 164). To some, Hobbes’s rhetorical tactics seem radical, but I see in them a sincere concern for a country in peril. Stanley Fish observes, and I partially agree,<sup>2</sup> that Hobbes will often “try to put something over on the

reader, but [only] because, as he passionately believes, no other engineering, grounded in something more substantial than words and the conclusions they compel, is available.” For this reason, Fish continues, Hobbes “bears an uncanny resemblance to the faith-based creed proclaimed by his great opposite, John Milton” (86-7).

In what does Hobbesian right reason consist if not the private reason he assigns to Milton and Salmasius? Furthermore, what is the connection between private reason and solitude? To begin answering these questions first requires an understanding of the way Hobbes conceives of the difference between natural law (*lex naturalis*) and natural rights (*ius naturalis*). In *Hobbes and the Law of Nature*, Perez Zagorin claims that Hobbes breaks rank with his political predecessors by *not* positing natural law as the *a priori* source from which natural rights derive. Zagorin notes Hobbes’s “unrivaled” ability to differentiate between natural right and law at a time when “the law of nature was generally thought to be the source of rights and natural rights” (28). While contemporaries like Hugo Grotius continued to subordinate *ius* (right) to *lex* (law), Hobbes designed a political system in which natural law and natural right function as “correlative concepts,” as Zagorin aptly states, without privileging one over the other (28). In the Hobbesian world, “natural rights do not derive from natural law,” but “have an independent existence as a primordial entitlement to freedom bestowed equally by nature on every individual and fully operative in the state of nature” (55).

In divorcing natural right from natural law, Hobbes opposes nature to itself, creating two domains of reason, private and public. Private reason convinces us of our “[natural] right to every thing; even to one another’s body” in our efforts to preserve life (3: 117). Meanwhile, public reason, or right reason, as Hobbes refers to it, encourages us to abide by natural law, whose first precept requires that we “*lay down this right to all things, and be contented with so*

*much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself*” (3: 117). While his predecessors sought ways to reduce natural right to natural law, Hobbes demonstrates their fundamental incompatibility, offering an implacably discordant view of nature. Humans can either abide by their natural right to everything, or they can surrender their right and seek peace through natural law. A difficult decision—or is it? So long as humans obey private reason and their right to everything, Hobbes tells us they will remain in a state of “war of every man against every man” (3: 117). No justice will exist in this condition, since “notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place,” and humans will live in a perpetual state of fear, in which life is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (3: 115). Perhaps the decision is not so difficult after all.

Given this exceedingly bleak assessment, in which death is forever imminent, Hobbes assumes humans will ultimately wish to relinquish their natural right to everything (with the exception of self-defense) in exchange for the security provided by natural law. To ensure that natural law prevails, Hobbes introduces the covenant, a pact to which everyone voluntarily consents, guaranteeing each person will “*divest* himself of the *liberty* of hindering another of the benefit of his own right to the same,” provided that such a divestiture, and any others that follow from it, do not immediately endanger the person’s life (3: 118). Only the fool would “breaketh his covenant, and consequently declareth that he thinks he may with reason do so,” since he will surely “be left or cast out of society,” like Aristotle’s lover of war, and thus will have acted “against the reason of his preservation” (3: 134). To make sure no execrable fools remain, however, and all covenants are kept, Hobbes proposes that all “men agree amongst themselves to submit to some man, or assembly of men, voluntarily, on confidence to be protected by him against all others” (3: 159). Enter the Hobbesian sovereign—a figure, writes Giorgio Agamben,

who retains the state of nature within him or herself. Occupying a state of exception, only the sovereign can visit on his people the very sort of violence/justice the civil state was created to prevent (35).

Unlike Aristotle's description of nature, which consists of a natural hierarchy of inherently social beings, Hobbes's state of nature consists of naturally equal but innately antagonist beings, all seeking power over a limited supply of resources in order to perpetuate their own lives, even if doing so requires them to kill one another. In exercising their natural right over everything, humans operate solely using *private reason*, in which each person decides right and wrong on a personal basis, thus precluding the existence of justice. This, too, separates Hobbes's philosophy from that of Aristotle, who understood justice as inextricable from nature, and nature itself as inseparable from divine order. For Hobbes, the state of nature represents discord, not order, a "war of every man against every man," in which "nothing can be unjust" because everyone relies on the private reason within (3: 115). It is Hobbes's hope that the opposite choice—an artificial state founded on right reason and natural law—will prove the more attractive alternative.

Hobbes believes his ability to predict the apocalyptic state of nature follows logically from the tenets of his epistemological system, which subordinates reason to speech, and speech to imagination. The subordination of reason to speech (a public phenomenon) is readily apparent from the passage above. There, Hobbes predicates reason on our ability to speak, claiming our faculty to "understand commands is a benefit of speech." This statement corroborates what Hobbes writes in *Leviathan*, wherein he defines reason as "nothing but *reckoning* [...] of the consequences of general names agreed upon for the *marking* and *signifying* of our thoughts" (3: 30). Without speech there would be no reason, according to Hobbes, since reason results when

humans properly employ speech, those “general names agreed upon” by all. In moments like these, Hobbes’s nominalist tendencies emerge, as he reaffirms his belief in the capacity of “general names” to stand in for things, but things without a universal form or idea. Daniela Coli, referring to this set of relations as “Hobbes’s revision of nominalism in an anti-ontological sense,” argues that Hobbes’s notion of “certainty and universality of knowledge do not [...] lie in some principle or principles innate in our minds, but are relative to men’s images” within themselves (79-80). In this system, Hobbes defines truth as “consist[ing] in the right ordering of names in our affirmation,” which, given the necessarily relative status of naming, ultimately renders it an agreement among people to name in the same way, hence the need for a sovereign to control definitions, establishing reasonable speech (3: 23). Hobbes’s subordination of reason to speech leaves unaccounted the relationship between speech and imagination. Furthermore, if truth consists of “the right ordering of names,” then presumably reason must exist in some form *prior to* speech. How else would it be possible to order names properly, thereby demonstrating truth, if not by means of some kind of prelinguistic reason? Hobbes agrees, identifying this nascent form of reason occurring prior to speech as judgment, which entails the ability of the imagination to order past and present sensory input to produce thought.

I will return to this discussion of reason and imagination momentarily. In the meantime, what of solitude? So far, I have focused almost exclusively on Hobbes’s categorical division of *ius naturalis* and *lex naturalis*, the effect of this division in the formulation of right reason, and how right reason naturally prepares the way for contractual government and, ultimately, the installation of a sovereign to oversee such covenants. Nothing at all has been said of solitude, though, which, it will be remembered, Hobbes calls an “enemy” in *Philosophical Rudiments*, the precursor to *Leviathan*. Steven Shapin argues that “solitude figured importantly in rhetoric

surrounding the new experimental science, and even in practical measures for its institutionalization” throughout the seventeenth century, but not so for Hobbes, who says that solitude prevents the creation of justice, which cannot “be in a man that were alone in the world” insofar as both justice and the covenants required to keep it “relate to men in society, not in solitude” (Shapin 202; Hobbes 78). While Boyle, Bacon, Newton, and others engaged a rhetoric of praise, championing the “retreat to a redefined and relegitimized solitude,” Shapin suggests that Hobbes, conversely, offered no such optimism (202, 203). His contrarianism on this point stems not just from the different projects in which these groups of people are engaged (Bacon and company interested in scientific experiment, Hobbes in justice), which would only require that Hobbes quietly decline solitude and be done with it. Hobbes outright denigrates solitude, though, precisely because it fits into his project of defending his own version of selfish (and the justice that self-centeredness allows) from the debased selfishness of solitude.

Many, including Zagorin, label Hobbes a positivist, whose notion of law excludes metaphysical abstractions, depending on nothing other than a highly regulated aggregate of utterances, monitored by the sovereign, beginning with the articulation of first definitions.<sup>3</sup> Yet, for legal positivism to function properly requires a belief in the ability of human reason to interpret sensory reality and express those findings in language. Hobbes’s faith in human reason derives, in part, from *Genesis* and the idea that the “first author of speech was *God* himself,” as he claims early in *Leviathan* (3: 18). But Hobbes, in his desire to convince atheists, must also prove his positivism on secular grounds.<sup>4</sup> It is my contention that, despite (or rather because of) his outward disdain for it, solitude provides him the rhetorical tool to do just that. To help explain how reason and the sensory world unite, Hobbes *imagines* a story about what would happen were they *not* united. This story takes place in the fictional setting of solitude and serves

as a warning to his readers, one that he hopes will convince them, through fear, of his positivist agenda. Availing himself of its meaning in early Christian texts, in which solitude was the arid battlefield on which eremites fought demons without and demons within, Hobbes allegorizes solitude as a farraginous hellscape, swarming with figments of the imagination—madmen, liars, pagans, wastrels—any entity he thought might deter readers from ever wanting to venture there.

In *Wayward Contracts* Victoria Kahn cogently argues that Hobbes, in keeping with the fashion of the time, understood “politics as a realm of poetics, even fabrication,” and government as “the product of a contractualist poetics, of mimesis construed not simply as imitation but also as the productive capacity of the human imagination to create new artifacts” (15). Kahn cites as evidence of this view the Introduction to *Leviathan*, in which “Hobbes made it clear that consent to the political contract depended on consent to a literary contract: a prior agreement about the dangers of romance, the limits of metaphor, and the right construction of analogy” (18). While Hobbes “claimed to have modeled his construction of the commonwealth on Euclidean mathematics,” nevertheless he “understood the metaphor of the political contract as requiring a narrative” (19). Ultimately, Kahn argues that Hobbes’s narrative requires that his citizen-readers imagine themselves as “female subject[s] of romance or of seventeenth-century domestic manuals, the wife who consents to be bound by her own passions to the hierarchical, inequitable, irrevocable marriage contract,” a far cry from Stanley Fish’s take on Hobbes, in which the philosopher merely wants to defend a country in peril (170).

Focusing attention on Kahn’s claim about the metaphoricity sustaining Hobbes’s political theory, I would like to expand on it by showing how Hobbes imagines solitude as a place of failed metaphor. While Hobbes pays homage to Euclidean geometry in claiming to begin with definitions and work from these toward their consequences, in fact, the opposite might be true. In

actuality, Hobbes might begin with a narrative about the consequences of solitude—humans imagining themselves as godlike, but acting like beasts—using this narrative to coerce his readers into believing his vision for society. Admittedly, this narrative about solitude shares many of the same plot devices as Hobbes’s narrative about the state of nature, and, in a way, the two narratives are the same. Both are fictions involving characters who subscribe to private reason—*ius naturalis* instead of *lex naturalis*—and both end with these same characters engaging in brutish, gladiatorial action. If, however, the state of nature is a “war of all against all,” solitude is better described as a war of the self against the self, in which an individual battles against his or her own inner being.

## II.

That Hobbes redeploys Aristotle’s beast/god formulation should come as no surprise to those familiar with Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*, a text that unites the two philosophers in demonstrating how both consent to a Western mode of reasoning that assumes “bare life in the political realm constitutes the original—if concealed—nucleus of sovereign power” (6). Opposite the good life, and therefore more closely resembling the life of the beast, “[b]are life,” writes Agamben, “remains included in politics in the form of the exception, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion” (11). Bare life, or sacred life, represents one form of exception in Agamben’s theory, insofar as the *homo sacer* (sacred man) can be killed by anyone with impunity but not ritually sacrificed. The other form of exception in Agamben’s text is the Hobbesian sovereign, whose right to violence “presents itself as an incorporation of the state of nature in society” (35). Because of his or her exceptional status, the sovereign reserves the right to enact the very sort of violence found in the state of nature, using this exception to enforce the

rules by which society will operate, lest it once again devolve into that state described in the passage from *De homine*. As complimentary states of exception, then, the *homo sacer* and the sovereign are mutually exclusive inclusions, the sovereign representing “*the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice,*” and the bare life of the *homo sacer* representing “*the life that may be killed but not sacrificed[,] [...] the life that has been captured in this [sovereign] sphere*” (83).

Hobbes fully endorses this power dynamic and uses solitude as a rhetorical device to convince his readers to do the same. The success of his narrative depends on how convincingly Hobbes can describe that hypothetical condition using his own imagination. In his epistemological system, imagination (*imaginatio*) performs the critical task of transforming the motions of sensory perception into eidetic imagery, which, when ordered correctly in speech, enables reason (*ratio*). To ensure its uninterrupted operation, the imagination is “*regulated by some desire and design,*” Hobbes explains (3: 13). Desire tells us what we want, then recruits the imagination to generate the concatenation of thoughts that lead us toward its completion. “Not only is reason a calculus at the service of the passions” in Hobbesian epistemology, Daniela Coli observes, “but the very rationality of the calculus is defined by the capacity of passion to guide the imagination and identify the means for reaching the desired objective” (75). As Todd Butler elucidates, “The key to right thinking” in Hobbes’s philosophy, “and thus by extension right action, [...] lies in [one’s] retaining proper control over the provision of such images” (163). Even the will is reduced to a desire in Hobbesian epistemology, it being labeled the last appetite in deliberating (3: 48). Animals can only witness and react to their desires, seeking the means to achieve them, whereas humans can use imagination to “*imagine what we can do with [that desired object], when we have it[,]*” allowing us to predict future outcomes, perhaps even the

apocalyptic outcome, in which “there would be no society” in the absence of speech, only “savagery” and “solitude” (3: 13).

The epistemological priority Hobbes assigns the imagination also includes the ability to embellish. This emphasis on embellishment places Hobbes, according to Quentin Skinner, within a longstanding humanist tradition that includes Cicero and Quintilian. Skinner notes how Hobbes makes use of *ornatus*, “the addition of ‘ornament’ or ‘adornment’ to our utterances in the form of figures and tropes,” which “is treated by Hobbes at all times as the distinctive product of a powerful imagination or fancy” (363). The sequence from *imaginatio* to *ratio* would not be complete with *elocutio*, which, for the Hobbes of *Leviathan*, means the use of *ornatus* in producing the right rhetorical effect. Used correctly, metaphors and other tropes can empower *ratio*, convincing a skeptical audience through “fresh and arresting” images, according to Skinner (366, 368). The misuse of *ornatus*, however, produces “monstrous and deformed” images that “tend to darken rather than illuminate our meaning, producing confusion and puzzlement” (368).

Skinner focuses primarily on the proper use of *ornatus* in the construction of puissant imagery, which, in the Hobbesian world, can only be achieved after “cultivating the virtue of discretion” (370). The most telling example of Hobbes’s own use of *ornatus*, though, occurs when he discusses what happens when a person without this “virtue of discretion” lets his or her imagination run wild. Not coincidentally, this kind of imagining affects “men that are not only without company,” that is, in solitude, “but also without care of anything,” that is, idle men, men who are bored, whose thoughts “are as busy as at other times,” but continue on “without harmony; as the sound which a lute out of tune would yield to any man, or in tune, to one that could not play” (3: 12).<sup>5</sup> As though to convince his audience of the power of imagination,

Hobbes tells them an elaborate story about what happens to the imagination in solitude, when it no longer operates using the cost-benefit analysis supplied “by some desire and design,” but instead persists “*unguided, without design, and inconstant,*” when “thoughts are said to wander, and seem impertinent one to another, as in a dream” (3: 12). Normally, “if the good” of an imagined action “be greater than the evil,” the action is deemed worthy (3: 50). In solitude, however, the imagination malfunctions, resulting not in the exercise of rational self-interest, but irrational self-seeking. In this “wild ranging of the mind,” as Hobbes describes it, which resembles a dream, humans “possessed with fearful tales and alone in the dark” will “believe they see spirits and dead men’s ghosts walking in churchyards” (3: 9-10). “From this ignorance of how to distinguish dreams and other strong fancies from vision and sense,” Hobbes adds, “did arise the greatest part of the religion of the gentiles in time past, that worshipped satyrs, fawns, nymphs, and the like; and now-a-days the opinion that rude people have of fairies, ghosts, and goblins, and of the power of witches” (3: 9).

In solitude, like in the state of nature itself, humans believe in private fictions that do not correspond to reality. Absurdities abound. The distinction between inside and outside collapses, disorienting the imagining subject, who can no longer tell which direction he or she faces, or if what he or she sees is real or an apparition. The world literally *deforms*, insofar as the outside forms one envisions no longer correspond in any way to reality. Whereas the proper use of imagination eliminates possibilities “till we come to some beginning [cause] within our own power” on which to act, this imagination run rampant, occurring in solitude, multiplies possibilities, convincing us of powers we do not possess (3: 13). Most of the time, imagination, under the command of the *telos* of rational self-interest, orders sensory data until it arrives at an actionable cause. This version of imagination, however, interferes with that process, upsetting

causality and allowing for contradiction. Truth disappears, and in its place occurs absurdity, which Hobbes defines as “senseless speech” (3: 32). Hobbes describes these absurdities as uniquely human, owing to our ability to use language. However, the actions that follow from them are decidedly brutish, proving that in solitude and without contract “man surpasses in rapacity and cruelty the wolves, bears, and snakes that are not rapacious unless hungry and not cruel unless provoked, whereas man is famished even by future hunger.” Lest his audience doubt him, Hobbes assures them this is the condition among “the savage people in many places of *America*,” who “live at this day in that brutish manner” (3: 114).

Diego Hernán Rossello argues for the way in which Hobbesian melancholy, a close synonym with solitude in the Renaissance, indicates an “unchecked irruption of the beast in man [that] resembles the re-emergence of the natural condition in the civil state, the emergence of liberty in subjection and the emergence of the passions in reason” (6-7).<sup>6</sup> For Rossello, “solitude, causeless fears, roaming the cemeteries and turning into an animal,” particularly a wolf, a condition known as lycanthropy, are all “*symptoms of melancholy* in the period and Hobbes seems to have been aware of them” (6, my italics). Though I generally agree with Rossello’s assessment, I also feel he undervalues the role of solitude in his findings. Solitude is not simply a “symptom” of melancholy, as Rossello would have it. Rather, melancholy and solitude function reciprocally throughout Hobbes’s texts, with solitude inducing melancholy and melancholy resulting in the “haunting of solitudes, and graves; in superstitious behaviour; and in fearing some one, some another particular thing,” to quote *Leviathan* (3: 62). To the extent that melancholy is an involuntary bodily response to environment, Hobbes seems more interested in convincing his readers of the dangers of solitude than in telling them to avoid the disease that results from it. While it might *not* be possible to avoid the “haunting of solitudes” once afflicted

with melancholy, it *is* possible, in Hobbes's mind, for a person not already afflicted with melancholy to avoid solitude. Thus, melancholy and the lycanthropy to which it gives rise are, ultimately, scare tactics Hobbes employs to ensure that his readers actively avoid solitude. It is for this reason that solitude, not melancholy, is the "enemy," since it is within a person's power to defeat.

In the midst of this unguided imagining, a person remains free from concatenated thought, unbound by calculated self-interest. It is a solitude marked by the experience of *akrasia*, in which a human, "without care of anything," as Hobbes says, romanticizes his or her being and "compoundeth the image of his own person with the image of the actions of another man, as when a man imagines himself a *Hercules* or an *Alexander*" (3: 6). Any action resulting from this delusional state, in which a person remains convinced of his or her own godlike abilities, will inevitably be beastly. In imagining him or herself a god, the solitary individual will act without prudence in an attempt to satisfy his or her every appetite, disrupting a philosophical system that has calculated self-interest, that "long chain of consequences," as its basis (3: 50). According to Todd Butler, it is "within such slippage between reality and representation that the failures and misdirection of the individual imagination, magnified by language and communicated to others, carry the potential for political disruption" (167). In the highly metaphorical setting of Hobbesian solitude, this is precisely what happens, in which humans, operating on private reason alone, commit actions that, like those of Aristotle's "natural outcast," are both self-serving and self-destructive.

To prove that his account of the perils of solitude remains consistent with Scripture, Hobbes must still explain Adam's understanding of God's command to name the animals, a command he receives while alone. Discussing the book of Genesis, the Hobbes of *De Homine*

asks, rhetorically, “in what manner could Adam have understood that command of God, when he did not yet know what was meant by *eating, fruit, tree, knowledge*, and lastly, *good or evil*” (38). If solitude designates a space in which language fails and reasonable humans cannot exist, then how did Adam, the first man, understand the highest form of speech, the command? Hobbes explains “that Adam understood that divine prohibition not from the meaning of the words, but in some *supernatural* manner” (38, my italics). In *Leviathan* Hobbes remarks similarly that God “instructed *Adam* how to name such creatures as he presented to his sight” before admitting that “the Scripture goeth no further in this matter” (3: 18). Hobbes would rather concede Adam’s supernatural ability than suggest a normal human can properly use language in solitude, opting to integrate the exceptionality of the Genesis myth, so as to avoid altering his own epistemology, which depends rhetorically on solitude’s dangers.

Hobbes’s seemingly straightforward description of what happens to a solitary person is complicated by the fact that the imagination is both that which supplies him the compelling narrative about solitude and that which malfunctions while in solitude. How, then, do we know that Hobbes himself is not *alone* in thinking of solitude as a state of degeneracy? In the positivist/mechanist world that Hobbes imagines, wherein truth consists of the right ordering of names, from whose meanings humans create syllogisms and, afterward, actionable claims, solitude presents him with a definitional dilemma. Solitude is the effect of incorrect imagining, but also the cause of it.<sup>7</sup> As an *effect*, solitude occurs when, imagining himself other than he is, a subject becomes isolated within his own fiction, speaking in absurdities, “as a bird in lime twigs, the more he struggles the more belimed” (3: 23). But solitude is also the *cause* of incorrect imagining, since Hobbes identifies people “without company” and “without care of anything” as the demographic most likely to imagine incorrectly. In this way, solitude constitutes a singularity

in Hobbes's texts—a seventeenth-century Bermuda Triangle—in which the words “cause” and “effect” themselves lose meaning.

Rather than ignore this dilemma, Hobbes intentionally exploits it rhetorically by imagining solitude quite literally as hell on earth, enlisting the reader to view it like him so as to avoid appearing himself like “a bird in lime twigs.” In the materialist world envisioned by Hobbes, a world divested of all metaphysical conceits, he hopes that solitude, as well as the hellish nightmare it might signal, will retain enough metaphysical afterglow to captivate his readers through a diabolic image of the otherworldly. Not that Hobbes himself believes in “satyrs, fawns, nymphs, and the like” or “the opinion that rude people have of fairies, ghosts, and goblins, and of the power of witches.” But his narrative about solitude suggests that one lonely day, if left to his own devices, he might start to believe in these ghastly figures, and this same fate might befall the reader, too, should he or she ignore Hobbes's warning. It is the fear of one day believing in these hallucinations that he hopes will be enough to convince his audience of the relative safety of his commonwealth. “It is a hard matter,” Hobbes writes, “and by many thought impossible, to distinguish exactly between sense and dreaming” (3: 7). Unlike Descartes, whose solipsistic “withdrawing into solitude” culminated in a similar conclusion concerning how difficult it is “to distinguish being awake from being asleep,” Hobbes does not emerge from his meditation believing in an infinite and immaterial God capable of permanently expelling doubt (13, 14). Ironically, Hobbes's only hope is the fear that his fictional narrative about solitude will inculcate in his readers, warning them of the deformed life imagined wrongly. While it might be a “hard matter” to “distinguish exactly between sense and dreaming,” it is not impossible. So long as readers imagine as Hobbes does, by imagining that they can tell the difference between sense and dreaming, all will be fine.

Christopher Scott McClure also points to the way in which Hobbes uses fear to the success of his own political agenda. Writing of Hobbes's equivocation over the eternity of hell, McClure argues that Hobbes's perplexing "interpretation of hell is meant to redirect individuals' anxiety about whether they are destined for heaven or hell into anxiety about whether there is a heaven or hell, and if so, how they could know anything certain about either" (3). Hobbes hopes to instill a similar anxiety when discussing solitude, though the motivation for doing so, I would argue, is different. In addition to inculcating within his readers a fear of the unknown, Hobbes's discussion of solitude also serves the more important task of proving to readers that they can *actually* imagine what they *might* imagine in solitude. In other words, the purpose of his discussion of solitude is not an attempt to confuse the reader about what solitude (or the state of nature) is or is not, but instead to convince them of what Hobbes and the reader, collectively, can imagine imagining it is, assuming they were subject to it. This meta-imaginative moment serves as the ur-covenant upon which all future covenants will depend. Imagining together what they might imagine alone, Hobbes can more easily convince them of what the imagination is and how it functions. What better way to explain the imagination than to ask his readers if they can imagine what they might, hypothetically, imagine while alone? On the basis of this imagined agreement Hobbes establishes what will later become government by contract, using the fear of the unknown, an unknown filled with the misfiring imaginations of solitary individuals, to argue for a strong centralized government. In this rhetorical setup, to refuse to imagine like Hobbes is also an act of self-incrimination, in which a person risks confinement within the very solitude he or she wishes to deny by imagining it differently.

### III.

We find in the figure of Milton's Satan many of the horrors Hobbes ascribes to those in a state of solitude. Satan's arguably most famous speech announces his belief in a solipsistic world, consisting of a "mind [that] is its own place, and in itself, / Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven" (1.255-256). A.B. Chambers directly links Satan's thinking at this important moment with the philosophy of Hobbes, arguing that "[w]hile [...] Satan declares himself unaffected by time and place," a predicament that resembles "those phantasms of the mind, as Hobbes calls them," nevertheless, "he cannot escape [...] the ultimate placing of himself by God" (101). From Chambers's perspective, Satan's parochialism prevents him from realizing that his own mind's emplacement is always relative to, and contained by, the "placeless place" of God, a narrow-mindedness that resembles the kind of megalomania afflicting humans in Hobbes's state of nature. Much the same way that Hobbes's nature lacks a sovereign, Milton's hell is a place in which "men live without a common power to keep them all in awe," leaving their minds to solitary wandering (3: 113). Chambers reads Satan's soliloquy as the example *par excellence* of the crazed egoism found in Hobbes's solitary state of nature.

Chambers thus reveals an unexpected affinity between Hobbes and Milton, albeit in the hell of *Paradise Lost*. His analysis suggests that Hobbes would likely find in Milton's metaphor for hell an especially convincing description of what happens in solitude, absent a sovereign power.<sup>8</sup> The infighting of the fallen angels, the tribalism, their questioning of God's omnipotence, as well as their decision to revenge their condition by sabotaging Eden—what Milton calls Pandemonium, Hobbes would likely call the solitudinous war of all against all, in which no common power exists to bind the wills of humans. Nor should the parliamentary speeches of the fallen angels convince otherwise, since, as Hobbes proposes, the state of nature "consisteth not in actual fighting," but instead the very sort of posturing that occurs in Milton's

hell, in which the “will to contend by battle is sufficiently known” (3: 113). It does not matter, according to Hobbes, whether war is really waged or not; what matters is the posturing for war, which is as harmful as actual war, constituting an imminent threat to the security of all, including, in the case of Milton, the safety of Eden. True as it might be that Milton’s *hell* is in no way analogous to Hobbes’s *hell*, because, as Christopher Scott McClure suggests, “Milton wavered between presenting hell as a state of mind and as another realm, while Hobbes is adamant that hell will be on earth,” nevertheless, it is possible to read Hobbes’s *state of nature* as analogous to Milton’s *hell*, a connection McClure almost makes when writing that in Hobbes’s theology the “damned will live much as those do in the present world who live under bad and [...] non-Hobbesian government” (8, 6).<sup>9</sup>

In reading Milton’s hell as a simulacrum of the state of nature, a Hobbesian would likely criticize it, taking issue with the remarks of Beelzebub, who claims that “war hath determined us,” as well as his questioning “what peace will be given / To us enslaved” (2.330, 332-33). The Hobbesian would disagree with Beelzebub’s conclusion, and the general consent, to wage war against “Some easier enterprise” in Eden by “force or subtlety” (2.345, 358). The way out of this hellish solitude, Hobbes would intimate, is not through more war and wiles, whether with heaven, as Moloch first proposes, or with Eden, as Beelzebub last suggests, but rather through seeking peace by submission to a common power in God. Even Belial, who opines that God “in time may much remit / His anger,” does not seek permanent peace through natural law, as a true Hobbesian would insist, but opts instead for “peaceful sloth,” suggesting he remains agreeable to the idea of future war, should it be necessary (2.210, 228). In Hobbesian terms, then, the fallen angels’ logic derives solely from private reason, which dictates actions according to natural right instead of natural law. Not one of the demons wishes to reinstate natural law by resubmitting to

God as sovereign; all would rather assert their natural rights than acquiesce to a natural law that requires them to seek peace through capitulation, having convinced themselves it is far “[b]etter to reign in hell, than serve in heaven” (1.263). Intractable logic of this sort recalls the Hobbesian fool, who reasons it acceptable to contravene natural law when the outcome holds the possibility of some benefit. While the desire to rebel against natural law is not wrong in and of itself, according to Hobbes, a belief to which Milton himself accedes through Adam’s character in Book 5, actual rebellion always violates reason, making the angels veritable fools in Hobbes’s book.<sup>10</sup> Despite the angels’ own claims to self-fashioning (“self-begot, self-raised”), their solitudes render them delusional (5.860).<sup>11</sup>

While the dilemma is Hobbesian, the solution is distinctly Miltonic. Rather than complete conformity, Hobbes’s fix to the problem, Milton advocates unity through difference. As Abdiel states, God plans “to exalt / Our happy state under one head more *near* / United,” a claim strongly reminiscent of Raphael’s claim, some three hundred lines earlier, that spirits are “*nearer* to [God] placed or *nearer* tending” (5.829-831; 476, my italics). The point is not complete unification, and thus a total loss of identity, but instead a “nearness” to God both physically and intellectually, which still allows for individual difference.<sup>12</sup> Milton hesitates to rid heaven of all signs of solitude, claiming in *Christian Doctrine* that even the “good angels stand by their own strength, no less than man did before his fall” (344-345). In refusing to “serve in heaven,” then, Satan rejects the wrong solution to the problem, namely, the Hobbesian solution. In this way, Satan and Hobbes can be said to represent two sides of the same debate, and that debate, according to Milton, is not one that either of them should be engaging. Just as Hobbes would refuse Satan’s bellicose posturing, Satan refuses Hobbes’s commonwealth of absolute obedience, questioning how anyone “can in reason then or right assume / Monarchy over such as live by

right / His equals” (5.794-796). Yet, neither Satan nor Hobbes seems able to escape the binary logic underwriting their disagreement with each other. Many a Miltonist has found in Satan’s lines some of Milton’s strongest repudiations of monarchy. Before we accept William Blake’s assertion that Milton “was of the devil’s party,” however, it is important to remember that Milton believed a person could be a “heretick in the truth,” believing an idea, but for the wrong reason, and that Satan’s repudiating the right idea for the wrong reason therefore makes him no more virtuous than if he completely and unquestioningly accepted monarchy, as Hobbes would insist he do (*YP* 2, 543).

Between Satan and Hobbes stands Abdiel, whose “constant mind / Though single” exemplifies the proper balance of unity and difference. Without this singleness of mind and body, Abdiel would lack agency, and thus the ability to reason for himself the best response to Satan’s impending rebellion. Upon his return from the cabal’s secret meeting, Abdiel is described as “one / Returned not lost,” at which point God addresses him directly: “Servant of God, well done, well has thou fought / The better fight, who single hast maintained / Against revolted multitudes the cause / Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms” (6.24-32). The language here parallels Milton’s description of his own polemical activities in the *Second Defense*. There, he discusses his verbal trouncing of Salmasius, the very same Salmasius that (alongside Milton) Hobbes also maligns in *Behemoth*. Portraying himself as a man “with greater strength of mind than of body,” Milton sees himself as someone who “exchanged the toils of war [...] for those labors which I better understood,” namely the labors of “defending the very defenders” in print against the accusations of those like Salmasius (*YP* 4, 553-554). “When he with insults was attacking us and our battle array,” writes Milton, “and our leaders looked first of all to me, I met him in single combat and plunged into his reviling throat this pen, the weapon of

his own choice. And [...] I bore off the spoils of honor” (324). The emphasis on the singleness of his act and the fact that he was “in word mightier than they in arms” suggests that Milton locates in himself an image of Abdiel. Meanwhile, Milton relegates Salmasius to the “revolted multitude” that includes those, like Satan, that outright reject monarchy in any form, as well as those, like Hobbes, who insist on monarchy as the only feasible form of government. Equidistant between the solipsism of Satan and the conformity of Hobbes, Milton positions himself as a person dually committed to unity and difference, society and solitude, a commitment that he is willing to defend, even if he must defend it, like Abdiel, while completely alone.

### Placing Blame: *Otium* and Shade in *Paradise Lost*

The issue of belatedness occupies Milton's thought in his personal letters, his sonnets, as well as during several autobiographical moments in his polemical tracts. Worried that his "late spring no bud or blossom shew'th," he routinely bemoans his own lack of productivity, even as he defends this literary dearth against claims of procrastination, assuring readers the "ease and leisure [that] was given [him] for [his] retired thoughts" was not obtained "out of the sweat of other men" ("Sonnet 7," 3-4; *YP* 1, 804). Rather than laziness, Milton cites insufficient learning for his poetic delay; he simply needs to know more before he can write more. Eventually, of course, Milton does get around to writing his great epic. Yet, his concerns over procrastination never entirely subside. Instead, Milton reroutes his anxieties concerning belatedness by locating them in the discourse of his female protagonist, Eve. Her fears over the production of literal fruits (as opposed to Milton's *literary* fruits) culminate in a similar quest for more knowledge, as she takes the advice of Satan and eats the forbidden food. That Milton locates his own anxieties concerning work and belatedness in a female character befits the person nicknamed the "Lady" of Christ's College, though the implications of his literary projection extend far beyond that name. In displacing his personal concern for time management onto his female character, Milton unconsciously redirects the culpability for the fall back onto himself as a writer whose self-perceived idleness results in the poem's delayed composition. Those who would label Milton a misogynist—and this list is not short—at the very least must acknowledge that a Milton who loathes Eve is a self-loathing Milton, since whatever blame regarding work might be assigned to Eve as a literary character could also be assigned to Milton as her literary creator.<sup>1</sup> Through the

character of Eve, then, Milton realizes his greatest fear, in which labor turns to leisure, bringing fruitful productions to a halt.

As though to avoid appearing too much like his protagonist, though, Milton also downplays their resemblance by emphasizing the differences between his fallen desire for knowledge and Eve's prefallen and fructose-based attempt at auto-didacticism. Poeticizing the prelapsarian world as one in which time and space are strictly regulated, Milton supplies Eve with an orderliness obviously lacking in the seventeenth-century England in which he writes. Here, I refer to the division of Eden into light and dark spaces, which correspond with the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, the life of the body and the life of the mind. Throughout the poem, moments of *otium*, a concept associated with leisure and often used disparagingly of poets and philosophers, occur in shade-designated areas, a coincidence few Milton scholars mention, probably because this motif appears in literature dating back to Greek times, and thus seems nothing new to the early modern poet, whose solitary study eventually "led [him] to the shady spaces of philosophy" (*YP* 1, 891).<sup>2</sup> Though related to solitude, *otium* differs from it insofar as Miltonic solitude signifies an ongoing human mode, in sunlight or in shade, whereas *otium* concerns a temporary retreat for the purposes of self-cultivation. Such a division of dark and light regions creates a chiaroscuro topography that aids Eden's inhabitants in deciding when and where to think and grow as humans and when and where to work, while also helping readers make sense of the poem's alternating pastoral and georgic modes. As a solitary act of contemplation that occurs under the noonday sun, then, Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit violates an Edenic geography designed specifically to resist trespasses of this sort. This chapter investigates the way in which Eve's error (from the Latin *errare*, to stray) connects her unfallen confusion of literal place to fallen confusions of language and poetic mode. For Milton, I argue,

the postlapsarian development of metaphor, theorized among Latin rhetoricians as a verbal shift from one place (i.e., *locus*) to another, finds its origin as much in Eden's geography as Eve's appetite. A violation of sacred geography, Eve's decision turns the blissful *otium* of prefallen Eden into what Milton describes in *Tetrachordon* as "intense thought and labor" after the fall (*YP* 2, 596). This is the labor of writing poetry, but also interpreting it, which, like Scriptural exegesis, now requires us to move "From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit" (12.303).

Divided into regions light and dark, "Both where the morning sun first warmly smote / The open field, and where the unpierced shade / Enbrowned the noontide bowers," Eden is deliberately zoned into areas meant for activities of the mind (including, for Milton, sex) and bodily activities such as fieldwork (4.244-46). Adam and Eve's personal bower, described as "shadier" than any other in literary history, serves as a *locus amoenus* for leisure time and intellectual conversation, as observed during Raphael's visit (4.705). This collocation of *otium* and *umbra* discovers its source in the original *otium* of God, who "retire[s]" during the creation of the cosmos, appointing his active and illuminated Son/Sun to divide the heavens and earth (7.170). Milton's contemplative God thereafter remains "Throned inaccessible," except when he "shad'st / The full blaze of [his] beams," suggesting we can only know him in and through a mantle of darkness (3.377-378). Complicating matters, then, is Eve's decision to leave Adam's "faithful side" that "still shades" her, a shade that connects her through Adam ("He for God only, she for God in him") to the *vita contemplativa*, thus allowing her to partake in "Food of the mind" while laboring in the field (9.265-266; 9.238; 4.299). When Adam retires to contemplate himself in Book 8, he does so in a "green shady bank profuse of flowers" (8.286). Similarly, his contemplation of the cosmos finds him conversing with Raphael under the "inwoven shade" of the bower, a conversation that Eve overhears from the "shady nook [she] stood behind" (4.693;

9.277). Upon retiring from Adam's obnubilating side, however, Eve breaks the placial tie between *otium* and *umbra*, assuming male prerogative when asking to Adam to "divide our labors," much the same way God divided himself from the Son, who then divided the heavens from the earth (9.214).

Lest we place all the blame on Eve, I relate her anxiety over production back to Milton's own concerns about poetic output and time well spent. I begin with a brief history of *otium* in the Western literary tradition, including Milton's autobiographical remarks concerning retired life. Next, I turn to *Paradise Lost*, and, in particular, those passages connecting shade with the *vita contemplativa*. Eve's reason for leaving Adam's side, thereby disrupting the *umbra/otium* connection, can be traced back to Satan's infiltration of her dream and subsequent hypnopedia, the subject of my third section.<sup>3</sup> Under Satan's tutelage, Eve confuses places real and imagined. "Assaying by his devilish art to reach / The organs of her fancy," the narrator relates, Satan enters Eve's dream as a second-rate poet, who then equips her with a new hermeneutic by which to misunderstand the shady place of *otium* (4.801-02).<sup>4</sup> Powered by Satan, fancy produces the "Wild work" of metaphor and equivocation (5.112). In identifying metaphor as the cause of Eve's *otium* in the sun, I extend the allegorical approach of Judith Anderson, who claims that "Satan's sin changes everything" (292). The spontaneous appearance of Sin "overwrite[s] Edenic monism," a monism that resists doubleness, substituting for it "metaphorical tension, which, when continued, becomes openly allegorical" (292-93). Eve's sunlit *otium* marks the moment this metaphorical tension is first realized in Eden. Whereas monistic Eden is a "mystical or metonymic" place that initially "denies the translative (i.e. metaphoric) and constructive function of language," to quote Anderson again, Eve's dream confuses her notion of place by introducing her to metaphor, and the idea that what should be shaded (for instance, her dream) might not be

(292). I do not believe, as some do, that Eve's dream indicates her already fallen status, but I am of the opinion that the dream instructs her in allegoresis, a method of interpretation that enables her to see allegory in a world as yet without it.<sup>5</sup>

## I.

The opposite of *negotium*, or business life, *otium* implies a life of leisure, a turning away from the *vita activa* to cultivate one's mental or spiritual faculties, seen as preparation for a return to public life. This passive state is depicted from ancient literature onward as occurring in shade. Writing of Roman culture, for instance, Brian Vickers claims that *otium* was often disparaged among authors of the period, except for poets like Virgil, who "flaunted" it by depicting unrequited lovers reclining in the shade of trees (24).<sup>6</sup> If not lovers, then the collocation of *umbra* and *otium* would conjure images of off-duty and out-of-work soldiers, whose unemployment would be seen as a potential risk to society. Sloth was viewed then much the same way it is now, as a defect of one's character. Understanding this more negative connotation of *otium* is necessary to understanding the work of Cicero, a writer whose praise of *otium* is often taken at face value. Forced into exile, Cicero made sure to distinguish between his own involuntary solitude and the leisurely solitude of his more indolent Roman counterparts. Were he to describe his own exile, he would use the phrase *otium cum dignitate*, a dignified leisure, one that contributes to society from outside of it. His is decidedly *not* the *otium* of which the poets speak when describing unrequited lovers bemoaning their situations in the shade of some tree, but instead a leisure that is actually not very leisurely at all. In a telling passage from *On Duties*, Cicero defends his *otium cum dignitate*, first by fulsomely praising the idle *otium* of Publius Scipio Africanus, who famously claimed that he was never less alone than when alone,

and then by contrasting Africanus's idle *otium* with his own productive *otium*. Cicero mockingly attributes Africanus's lack of literary production while alone to his overactive imagination. Surely, Cicero suggests, with an air of sarcasm, the unproductiveness of Africanus must have been the result of his too-active mind and not any passivity on his part. In contrast to Africanus's literary dearth, Cicero touts his own productivity, claiming he does "not have enough strength to withdraw myself from loneliness by silent reflection; I have directed all my devotion and concern towards this type of literary work," referring to his current undertaking (102). Similarly committed to solitary production, Seneca writes of contemplative man, "wherever the secret location of his leisure hours, he should make it his aim to benefit individual men and the world at large by means of his intellect, his voice, his advice" (119).

The same denunciation of idle *otium* can be found in Saint Augustine's *City of God*, this time from a Christian perspective, one that emphasizes self-knowledge as a means of benefitting society. "For," Augustine writes in *City of God*, "no one ought to live a life of leisure in such a way that he takes no thought in that leisure for the welfare of his neighbor" (948). He continues, arguing "the delight offered by the life of leisure ought to consist not in idle inactivity, but in the opportunity to seek and find the truth, so that everyone may progress in this regard, and not jealously withhold his discoveries from others" (948). Centuries later, Petrarch will return to Augustine's discussion in *Secretum*, a didactic text, written as a conversation between Franciscus (Petrarch) and Augustinus (Augustine). This text is perhaps most notable for its ambiguous ending, in which, after hundreds of pages of Franciscus acquiescing to Augustinus's rebukes, he turns to go, saying "I cannot restrain my desire for the world," effectively denying all the previous discussion (148). The fictional Augustine wishes Petrarch to use his leisure time to contemplate death and the afterlife, whereas Petrarch's fictional stand-in seems unable to

separate himself from the sensuous world around him.

As the conclusion of *Secretum* attests, conversation surrounding *otium* drastically changes beginning with Petrarch, who views the *vita contemplativa* as a personal choice that need not serve any higher purpose than the participant's own enjoyment of it. A life in shade could be the wrong choice—and for many people it certainly is—yet it is a choice that an individual of estimable birth should have the right to make, as indicated in another work of his, *De vita solitaria*. Julia Conaway Bondanella likewise concludes that Petrarch changes the debate surrounding *otium*, asserting that he “creates a model of leisure for an educated elite” made possible by his “modestly pos[ing] as a man who offers no general rules beyond his observation that individual experience and one's own nature must serve as a guide to living” (17-18).<sup>7</sup> To be sure, Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* is not a repudiation of the Aristotelian belief, a mainstay of Greco-Roman thought, that man is an inherently social animal, since his own *otium* willingly admits of friends. Yet, his argument in favor of *otium* is unique in that it privileges the idiosyncrasies of the individual over conformity to the group. He advocates a secularized *otium* in which the individual removes him or herself from society for the pleasure that such withdrawal might bring. If this *vita contemplativa* incidentally benefits society, then all the better. The primary objective, however, remains knowledge of the self and the world, which requires that the individual withdraw from the noise of an urban environment and retire to a shaded countryside.

The Petrarchan emphasis on solitude for the purpose of self-cultivation, a variant of Saint Augustine's, most appeals to poets such as Milton, especially during the tumult of the English Civil War. As Janette Dillon points out, solitude of the seventeenth century attained a sense of moral respectability largely absent from sixteenth-century England, when solitude was often

condemned as selfish and a sign of villainry, much as it had been centuries before in Rome (24). Many writers of the Protestant persuasion championed *otium* as consistent with the doctrine of *sola fide*, which affirmed one's personal relationship with God, even if such a relationship involved a partial or total renunciation of the world of *negotium*. In a section of *The Divine Life* entitled "Of Conversing with God in Solitude," Puritan theologian Richard Baxter succinctly expresses this sentiment, claiming "I have more to do with God, than with all the world: Yea more and greater business with in one day, than with all the world in all my life" (358). He continues, writing that

If I be idle, or seem to want employment, when I am to contemplate all the Attributes, relations, mercies, works, and revealed perfections of the Lord, its sure for want of eyes to see, or a Heart enclined to my business: if God be not enough to employ my soul, then all the persons and things on earth are not enough. (361)

In addition to these overtly religious justifications of solitude, Milton also had the backing of other poets, including Virgil, who had extolled the virtues of *otium* and *umbra* throughout his writings. Virgil's influence on Milton's understanding of solitude can be seen most readily in the speaker of *Lycidas*, who, like Virgil's unrequited lover, begins the poem in mourning underneath the shade of trees, except where Virgil's lover bemoans a female counterpart, Milton's speaker bemoans the loss of a male friend. The Virgilian influence also appears in the person of Milton's Adam, whose desire for a mate finds him in conversation with God while retired to a sylvan shade.

Given the increasing acceptance of *otium* in English culture as a result of early humanists such as Petrarch, as well as the literary precedent set by Virgil, Ovid, and many others, it seems obvious that Milton would unconditionally commend it as a worthwhile endeavor, since his

Protestant affiliation already inclined him toward a personal relationship with God. To a certain extent, he does advocate for *otium*. In the first elegy to Charles Diodati, for instance, Milton openly praises his temporary retreat from Cambridge, complaining that the “barren fields” of “Cam” “lack any gentle shade” and therefore “are not a proper place / for those of us who follow the great Phoebus / and set for ourselves the edifying task of producing / poetry” (lines 12-16).<sup>8</sup> “If this rustication of mine is supposed to be an exile,” he continues, referring to his forced retirement, “the punishment is this carefree leisure and ease,” wherein “I may spend my time with the tranquil Muses and books,” or at the theater, where (here referencing the Latin connotation of *otium*) he might witness “the lover or the sly off-duty soldier” (19-30). Commenting on this epistolary elegy, Mandy Green argues that Milton contrasts his own leisured exile from Cambridge to the harsh exile from Rome that Ovid experienced. “Unlike Ovid,” she writes, “who was without free and easy recourse to books, Milton is enjoying the freedom to read what he wants when he wants and then, when he desires a change, he can turn to the theatre or take a stroll outside to refresh himself with scenes of natural beauty—a shady grove or a group of pretty girls out walking” (92). The same sentiment appears again in Prolusion VII, in which he praises a shaded *otium* that, according to Barbara Lewalski, “he had come increasingly to value as the proper milieu for both scholarship and poetry” (45).

No doubt, then, Milton valued *otium* as indispensable to his vocation as a poet, which led to five years of self-directed study after receiving his master’s degree. Yet, it is obvious from various documents, the 1633 letter first among them, that Milton also struggled with the idea of *otium*, fearing his own might lead to an idleness of the sort condemned by the authors he most respected. In the letter, he chastises the sender for thinking he has “given up my selfe to dreame away my Yeares in the armes of studious retirement like Endymion w<sup>th</sup> the Moone as the tale of

Latmus of [sic] goes” (*YP* 1, 319). Milton criticizes “this affected solitarinesse” as averse to his interest as an aspiring writer, later assuring his interlocutor that he delays not because of some “endlesse delight of speculation” but rather out of “a sacred reverence & religious advisement how best to undergoe” the task of writing his great works. He ends, however, with an observation on a “certain belatednesse in me” (*YP* 1, 319-320). Nor is the oft-cited 1633 letter the only instance of Milton’s anxiety. In outlining his ideal curriculum in *Of Education*, he condemns indolence as a contributing factor of “that which casts our proficiency therein so much behind,” citing the “time lost partly in too oft idle vacancies,” in which children leave off from learning for a period but with nothing else to occupy them (*YP* 2, 371). This fear at the possibility of an idle and unproductive *otium* also helps explain passages like this one from *Tetrachordon*, in which Milton defends marriage as a necessary release from the arduous task of the *vita contemplativa*:

No mortall nature can endure, either in the actions of Religion, or study of wisdom, without sometime slackning the cords of intense thought and labour[.] [...] We cannot therefore alwayes be contemplative, or pragmaticall abroad, but have need of some delightful intermissions, wherin the enlarg’d soul may leav off a while her severe schooling; and like a glad youth in wandring vacancy, may keep her hollidaies to joy and harmles pastime: which as she cannot well doe without company, so in no company so well as where the different sexe in most resembling unlikenes, and most unlike resemblance cannot but please best and be pleas’d in the aptitude of that variety (*YP* 2, 596-597).

Qualities normally imputed to *otium*, including those “delightful intermissions,” in which the unencumbered soul is “like a glad youth in wandring vacancy,” Milton instead assigns to

marriage, which mollifies the strain of mental work. Meanwhile, he characterizes his actual *otium* as “intense thought and labour.” As if to preempt any accusations of an idle *otium*, Milton syntactically joins “thought and labour,” modifying this single idea with the adjective “intense.”

In general, Milton throughout his writing career appears especially preoccupied with *kairos*, that is, the right time to perform such “intense thought and labor,” often referring self-deprecatingly to his own belatedness. For instance, the speaker of “Sonnet 7” worries that his “hasting days fly on with full career,” while his “late spring no bud or blossom shew’th” (3-4). A similar concern for time well spent appears in *Ad Patrem*, too, in the form of shame at his present inability to repay his father’s contributions through acclaimed verse. If in these works Milton defends against a career begun too late, in *The Reason of Church Government* he defends against a literary career begun too early, as his conscience forced him to “write thus out of mine own season, when I have neither yet compleated to my minde the full circle of my private studies” (*YP* 1, 807). In all cases, Milton’s self-portrayal is consistently that of a man out of synch and anxious about those who might accuse the “ease and leisure [that] was given thee for thy retired thoughts” as having been obtained “out of the sweat of other men” (*YP* 1, 804).<sup>9</sup>

As much as Milton agonizes over his use of *otium*, Eve remains completely unconcerned by hers. Committed to her work, she sees herself as an industrious worker, even finding a way to maximize productivity, directing Adam, “Let us divide our labors” (9.214). Yet, this increase in production never occurs, and instead Eve succumbs to an inopportune *otium*, gazing longingly at the forbidden tree, an image of idolatry, but also idleness. In Eve, then, we catch a glimpse of anxious Milton, whose commitment to the principle “that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought him selfe to bee a true Poem, that is, a composition, and patterne of the best and honourablest things” we find tested in the first woman

(*YP* 1, 890). Writing his own worst fear into the actions of his female lead, Milton both sublimates those feelings by locating them externally, during the first instance of sin, while simultaneously redirecting blame back to himself, insofar as the poem in which that sin appears is itself belated, the effect of perhaps too much waiting. As if to avoid blame for that waiting, Milton supplies prelapsarian Eden with topographical features unavailable to him, thus extenuating his own perceived misallocation of *otium*. Unlike the fallen world, where one must decide how best to use *otium*, Eve's world is highly regulated between light and dark areas, which correspond to the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. To be sure, the landscape still invites choice from its occupants, but the choice is made easier by the presence of such features, which no longer exist in the postlapsarian world. Despite this easy partitioning, however, Eve still manages to convince Adam to let her leave, which, as the film tagline goes, finds her in the wrong place at the wrong time.

## II.

The privacy of paradise is evident from the earliest descriptions of the place. Upon approaching paradise, Satan describes it as “an enclosure green,” whose “verdurous wall” allows Adam a panorama of the “nether empire neighboring round” (4.133-145). Milton's paradise is literally a gated community (“One gate there was, and that looked east”), whose membership is determined by the amount of virtue one has, not material wealth (4.178). One almost expects the gate to contain a sign that reads: *Elysian Estates, Keep Out*. Not that such a sign would prevent Satan, an outsider, from entering, who like a “prowling wolf,”

Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,

Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve

In hurdled cotes amid the field secure,  
 Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the fold:  
 Or as a thief bent to unheard the cash  
 Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,  
 Cross-barred and bolted fast, fear no assault,  
 In at the window climbs, or o'er the tiles. (4.183-191)

Milton describes paradise using pastoral and city imagery alike, comparing Satan's unlawful entrance both to a wolf in a pasture and a thief in the house of "some rich burgher." Regardless which metaphor one chooses, Milton makes clear that this outdoor setting, unlike the wildernesses of *Comus* and *Paradise Regained*, is designed to fit the needs of its occupants. Its accommodating qualities bolster the reading of John Gillies, who surmises that "Miltonic environment responds ontologically to the spiritual character of its guest species," helping to explain why the "intimacy of this placial tie is broken" after their fall from grace (40). Practically speaking, Milton's division of Eden into light and dark, work and thinking, enables him to distinguish between pastoral and georgic at a time when, as Paul Alpers notes, the two modes "merge in various ways, largely because in Christian thought ideas of humility are connected with the curse of labor" (28).<sup>10</sup>

Despite the fact that all of paradise is private, where, according to God, "unrivalled love" might find "blissful solitude," some locations are clearly meant to be more private than others, especially the bower, "a place / Chosen by the sovereign planter," whose exceptional privacy is indicated by its shaded seclusion (4.692-93; 3.65-69). Determined to make his bower literally the coolest of them all, Milton assures his readers that never before has a "shadier bower / More sacred and sequestered" existed, contrasting his sacred shade to the "feigned" shade found in the

literature of Pan, Silvanus, and Faunus, alluding to his Greek and Roman models (4.705-708). Though allusive, his is a shade that remains non-allegorical. This is decidedly *not* the shade of Spenser's Bower of Bliss, whose *umbra*, writes Mattison, mediates between the real and artificial, "creating an allegorical structure in which the real is read through the Bower's unreality and the Bower's unreality is read through its relationship to the real" (90). Nor is it Spenser's Garden of Adonis, an "allegory of mind," according to Kenneth Gross, in which "the poet overheard himself thinking" (360, 361). As such, Adam and Eve's morning aubade, though replete with light and dark imagery that verges on symbolic, should not be read allegorically, but as the "Unmeditated" and divinely inspired verse of daily ritual (5.149). If ever the shade of unfallen Eden seems metaphorical, it is perhaps because "We enter Eden with Satan and never see it without an awareness of his predatory, allegorical presence," as Anderson states, a "presence [that] brings doubleness and perceived dualism with it" (294).<sup>11</sup> From the perspectives of unfallen Adam and Eve, however, the meaning of shade remains sacred, as Adam acknowledges when explaining to Raphael that "by sovereign gift" they "possess" this "spacious ground," referring to "yonder shady bower," in which he requests they "sit and taste" until the "sun more cool decline" (5.366-70).

Throughout the poem, the noun "bower" is modified by the adjective "shady" or "shaded" more often than it is not. For Raphael, its shade actually seems more important than the bower itself, instructing Adam to "lead on then where thy bower / O'ershades" (5.375-76). Once inside, and after a cornucopia of choicest fruits had been consumed, "sudden mind arose / In Adam," who presses Raphael on matters cosmological (5.452-53). Not unlike Plato's *Symposium* or Erasmus's *Religious Feast*, texts that depict the life of *otium* as occurring among men philosophizing in the shade of a house, Milton's *Paradise Lost* conceives of the bower as a place

of scholarly contemplation for Adam and Raphael, while dining on fruits provided by Eve. In addition to the passages cited above, wherein the narrator describes the bower as “shadier” than its “feigned” counterparts, and whose roof is made of “inwoven shade,” he also contrasts Eden’s bowers (indeed, there is more than one) to the sunlit field. At the start of Book 4, he provides perhaps the most definitive example of the difference between the sun of the field and the shade of the bowers when describing

Both where the morning sun first warmly smote  
The open field, and where the unpierced shade  
Enbrowned the noontide bowers: thus was this place,  
A happy rural seat of various view. (4.244-46)

This “various view” unambiguously divides paradise between the “open field” and the “noontide bowers.” Not long after this description, the narrator recounts how Adam and Eve use the entrance to their bower as a place of prayer. After they “at their shady lodge arrive,” the narrator describes how “both stood[.]”

Both turned, and under open sky adored  
The God that made both sky, air, earth and heaven  
Which they beheld, the moon’s resplendent globe  
And starry pole[.] (4.720-24)

Again referring to the darkness of the “shady lodge,” the narrator here describes a moment of prayer that occurs in the liminal space of the doorway of the bower, as the couple contemplates God’s creation before retiring for the evening. One can imagine the shadow cast by the bower as the couple stands in the threshold, openly praising God’s handiwork in the gloaming.

Like the outdoor privacy of garden, woods, and bower, and elsewhere described by Mary

Thomas Crane, the shady bowers of Eden function as natural enclaves within the larger paradise that specifically serve the *otium* of its occupants.<sup>12</sup> Similar to the outdoor privacy found in Montagu's *The Shepherd's Paradise* and many other early modern texts, the blissful bower is described in strictly domestic terms, rendering it more of a house than the natural place it proclaims to be. Normally, domesticity would not mean leisure, particularly for women, whose role in early modern *oikos* was housework. In the utopian setting of Eden, however, her femininity does not prevent Eve from enjoying leisure too. This is especially true of her nursery, annexed to their central bower. Sitting "retired in sight" while Adam and Raphael converse, Eve then "went forth among her fruits and flowers, / To visit how they prospered, bud and bloom, / Her nursery" (8.41-46). The most obvious meaning of "nursery" is a place for the care of young plants awaiting transplantation. While Milton intends this definition primarily, he likely has other meanings in mind, including Randle Cotgrave's 1611 dictionary entry, quoted in the OED, which defines the word "nursery" simply as a "priuat roome onely for women" (OED, I.1.b). He probably also intends "nursery" to mean a place of contemplation, as when the Elder Brother of *Comus* describes contemplation as "nurse" to the "retired solitude" of "Wisdom's self" (375-377). Combining these definitions, then, one might say Eve uses the nursery as a place of feminine *otium*, not for manual labor, so much as to "visit" (from *videre*, "to see") how the plants "prospered" by their own accord. It is a room of her own, to quote Virginia Woolf, a place to which Eve will refer in Book 9 when requesting leave from Adam, arguing that she knows of Satan, having "from the parting angel overheard / As in a shady nook I stood behind" (9.277-76). The "shady nook" provides Eve a place not only to be alone (and eavesdrop) but also to contemplate the evil that Satan represents. On the day of the fall, Eve will refer back to these shady contemplations, claiming they have prepared her to be alone in the field.

The bower, then, facilitates the first couple's *otium*, serving as a place to talk, pray, philosophize, and engage in sex, described in *Paradise Lost*, as it is throughout Milton's divorce tracts, as an intellectual experience "Founded in reason" (4.755). Adam confirms this spatial allocation when educating Eve, explaining to her that

[...] other creatures all day long  
 Rove idle unemployed, and less need rest;  
 Man hath his daily work of body or mind  
 Appointed, which declares his dignity,  
 And the regard of heaven on all his ways[.] (4.616-20)

By "Appointed," Adam means that God has assigned the "daily work of mind or body" to a specific time and place. "Labour and rest" are "as day and night to men / Successive," according to Adam, but labor is itself subdivided in Eden, such that mental labor occurs in shade and physical labor in the sun (4.613-14). Occupying a liminal space between the two extremes, darkness/rest and daylight/work, shade denotes a space intended for labors of the mind, the *vita contemplativa*.<sup>13</sup> When not physically exerting themselves during the day, then, the first couple must return to some shade to engage in mental exertion, lest they be found roaming "idle [and] unemployed," like the animals of the open field. The need to abide by the spatial allocation of mind and body in Eden is especially important at noontime, "whence no way round / Shadow from body opaque can fall" (3.618-19). God himself indicates as much when he instructs Raphael to

Converse with Adam, in what bower or shade  
 Thou find'st him from the heat of noon retired,  
 To respite his day-labour with repast,

Or with repose[.] (5.230-233)

Discoursing here with Raphael, God inadvertently responds (in a very literal way) to the question Milton poses to him in Sonnet 16, whether he “exact[s] day-labour, light denied” (7). The answer in prelapsarian Eden is an emphatic “no.” As a “light denied” area, shade functions as a space in which Adam and Eve “respite” their “day-labour with repast,” rather than continue physical work. As the Milton of the 1633 letter insists, citing John 9:4 in his defense, “Christ comands all to Labour while there is light” (*YP* 1, 319). That which Christ commands to his disciples, Milton commands to his literary characters, who must “labour” physically “while there is light,” but then engage in mental activity while in shade.<sup>14</sup>

As much as possible, given the fallen status of language, Milton divides Eden literally and unequivocally into shade and sunlight, corresponding to the *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, respectively. A “quintessence pure / Sprung from the deep,” sunlight continues to be affiliated with physical acts of creation in Eden, whereas shade designates the place of divine contemplation (7.244-45). When Eve contemplates her image at the lake, for instance, it is while “Under a shade of flowers” (4.451). Confusing her image for another, God must lead her back to where “no shadow stays / Thy coming,” that is, to a sunlit area (4.470-71). Likewise, when Adam begins to contemplate his solitude, he too retires to a “green shady bank profuse of flowers,” one that Andrew Marvell might have had in mind when poeticizing his “green thought in a green shade” (8.286).<sup>15</sup> While the pastoral shade of *Paradise Lost* designates the sacred place of *otium*, including “the rites / Mysterious of connubial love” (4.627-29), the sunlit field serves as the place for active employment, where Adam and Eve together tend to “branches overgrown, / That mock our scant manuring, and require / More hands than ours to lop their wanton growth” (4.742-43). This partitioning of body and mind is not a refutation of Edenic

monism—what Raphael terms “one first matter all”—so much as an example of an ontological process of rarefaction intrinsic to it, modeled on Aristotle’s theory of souls, in which things “more refined, more spirituous, and pure” are “nearer to [God] placed” (5.472; 475-76). In shade, Adam and Eve are ontologically closer to God, who is himself described by the narrator as “throned inaccessible,” excepting “when thou shad’st / The full blaze of thy beams” and then “Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear” (3.377-80). Poeticizing Aristotle’s theory of three souls, Milton divides his Eden into two “active spheres,” which suffice to separate Adam and Eve’s “daily activities of body or mind” until “body up to spirit work,” at which point they will dispense with physical labor altogether (5.477-78; 8). Whereas Adam explains to Eve that humans have been “Appointed” (literally, given a specific, geographic point) to employ *either* “body *or* mind,” Eve takes leave from him only to find herself alone in a brightly lit grove, desiring to “reach, and feed at once *both body and mind*” (9.779, my italics). Insofar as the confusion of *otium*’s proper place results from her separation from Adam, she resembles the Eve of Lucy Hutchinson’s *Order and Disorder*, “On whose weak side,”

th’ assault had not been made

Had she not from her firm protection stray’d;

But so the Devil then, so leud men now

Prevail, when women privacies allow[.] (4.171-174)

Adam retains a belief in the sacred univocality of place, in which the bower is a *locus amoenus* for the mind, the field a *topos* for physical exertion, but Eve’s dream, as we shall see, acquaints her with the possibility of one place being “like” another, a hermeneutic she applies during her argument with Adam.

### III.

A simple but persistent question has perplexed Milton critics for many years. Namely, what motivates Eve to seek leave from Adam prior to the fall? Robert Wznura supplies a plausible explanation when claiming her dream “mitigates Eve’s ignorance and forces her to contemplate horizons beyond those presented by Adam,” while at the same time introducing her to the idea of “multiplication, duplicity, conjugation, and endless permutation” (109, 115). Though he never uses the word “metaphor,” Wznura agrees that the dream first acquaints Eve with the prospect of equivocation, arguing that, within the dream, the tree—and no longer Adam—“becomes the grounding of the [dream] experience, and, subsequently, a possible object of desire” (119). Though he accounts for Eve’s arborescent cathexis once she arrives at the tree of forbidden knowledge, Wznura never entirely explains why Eve desires leave from Adam in the first place. To do that, I suggest returning to the dream itself, which Mindele Anne Treip accurately describes as “true” in “a prefigurative and allegorical sense” (202). The episode begins with the arrival of the angelic brigade. Once at the bower, we see Satan

Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve;  
 Assaying by his devilish art to reach  
 The organs of her fancy, and with them forge  
 Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams[.] (4.799-803)

The simile “Squat like a toad” alerts the reader to Milton’s own struggle as a fallen poet to describe the event. His description should not be read as a mimetic replication of the event as it actually occurred, but rather a poetic approximation *ex post facto*, in which the narrator imagines Satan appearing “like a toad.” As such, the verse acts as both an example (via simile) and explanation (via content) of his inability to recount with verisimilitude exactly what happened.

“Assaying by his devilish art to reach / The organs of her fancy,” Satan, as we later learn from Adam, reverses the usual order of things, infiltrating Eve’s fancy and forcing it to usurp reason’s throne. Normally, reason is “chief,” says Adam, but when reason “retires / Into her private cell” at night, then “mimic fancy wakes” and attempts to “imitate” the finer art of its superior (5.102, 108-111). Like Satan, who awakes in heaven to press his neighbor about the “new laws” imposed on the angelic order with the arrival of the Son, Satan-controlled fancy awakes in Eve to enact a similar usurpation of divine reason (5. 679). The corruption Satan visits on divine reason while in heaven he also visits on human reason while in Eve’s dream.

Satan’s infiltration of Eve’s dream works to reaffirm the initial uncertainty she exhibits to Adam when asking him why the stars still shine “when sleep hath shut all eyes” (4.658). If Eden is a sacred place divided by light and dark, then why do stars glow in the night sky? A perfectly reasonable question, if ever there was one. Adam’s response—that stars, “though unbeheld in deep of night, / Shine not in vain” because “spiritual creatures walk the earth / Unseen”—temporarily addresses the issue. But when Satan enters her dream, inviting her to rise because “now reigns / Full-orbed the moon, and with more pleasing light / Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain, / If none regard,” his speech directly counters that of Adam, who, moments before, told her the stars shine “not in vain,” even though she is not awake to see them (5.41-44). In illuminating her dream with the fanciful light of an imagined moon, Satan convinces Eve that night is like day, that sleep is like wakefulness, that the shaded bower is like the sunlit field, a confusion that is recreated textually through the dichotic enjambment of “light / Shadowy.” In brief, Satan prepares the way for Edenic allegory by rendering the shadowy world of the dream analogous to the real and light-filled world. “I rose as [though] at thy call,” Eve tells Adam using simile, admitting she thought Satan’s voice sounded *like* that of her husband, her behavior

following suit (5.48). Once beside the dream-tree, she observes a figure “shaped and winged *like* one of those from heaven,” again employing simile to describe the imagined angel (5.55, my italics). Edenic place loses its reverential/referential status for Eve throughout her dream, which convinces her that places can be relative to one another, a defining feature of Miltonic allegory.

Despite Adam’s attempt to assuage Eve’s anxiety about the implications of the dream, reminding her that “Evil into the mind of god or man / May come and go,” nevertheless, the dream, I suggest, alters the interpretive context in which Eve operates (5.117-18). Edenic place remains sacred even after the dream, but Eve’s understanding of it changes. As a sacrosanct and anti-allegorical locale, Eden relies on the ritualistic observance of its inhabitants. The bower is a site of *umbra* and life of *otium*; the field is a place of manual work and collaboration. The tree stands alone as a monument of God’s divine fiat and “sacred fruit forbidden” (9.904). Through the dream, however, Satan convinces Eve that the bower is other than what it seems. In it, Eve is transported to the forbidden tree, where, she later tells Adam, “I, methought, / Could not but taste” of its fruit (5.85-86). While Eve does not taste, nor does the dream predetermine her decision to taste in Book 9, nevertheless, the dream itself contributes to that decision by confusing one locus for another, which is the primary definition of metaphor as Latin rhetoricians understood it. Though true that “Eve’s unwilled dream” could be used as “an opportunity to confirm and strengthen her freely willed obedience by means of a fully informed imagination,” as McColley asserts, nevertheless, it seems Eve is not met with success in this new enterprise (40).

Anxious about the relationship between dreaming and knowing, Eve initially embodies many of the same worrisome traits as Milton, who neurotically defends against the idea of “giv[ing] up my selfe to dreame away my yeares in the armes of studious retirement like

Endymion w<sup>th</sup> the Moone as the tale of Latmus of [sic] goes” (*YP* 1, 319). Eve’s oneiric worry will eventually subside, but not before other fears take hold, also involving knowledge production, and these too have a basis in Milton’s personal life. For instance, the fear Milton expressed in *The Reason of Church Government* that the “ease and leisure [that] was given [him] for [his] retired thoughts” was obtained “out of the sweat of other men” is strongly reminiscent of the language Eve uses during the separation scene when arguing that she and Adam should “divide their labors,” lest the “hour of supper comes unearned” (9.225). Though she is concerned about the production of literal fruits, not literary fruits, even that changes during her discussion with Adam, who reminds her that “Food of the mind” is not prohibited in the field, so long as it occurs by the “faithful side” that “shades” and “protects” her. Worried that she is lazy, and that the “hour of supper comes unearned,” Eve devises a plan to increase productivity, much like Milton, who expedited his poetic output toward the end of his career, perhaps out of a recurring fear that his “hasting days fly on.” Both Milton and Eve, then, respond to their respective concerns for belatedness with an attempted increase in production. While Milton’s escalation resulted in the production of *Paradise Lost*, Eve’s produced the main event of that poem, the eating of the forbidden fruit.

Intentional or not, then, parallels exist between Milton’s belated act of writing and Eve’s gluttonous act of eating, which both can be traced back to anxieties concerning *otium* and good time management. For Eve, however, the fault specifically has to do with a misconception over Edenic geography.<sup>16</sup> Responding to her desire to leave, Adam initially denies that request, advising her to “leave not the faithful side / That gave thee being, still shades thee and protects” (9.265-66). Unsatisfied with this response, Eve begins to question whether they can be happy at all when “In narrow circuit straitened by a foe,” assuming she will “double honour gain” by

resisting Satan's ploys while by herself (9.323, 332). She continues, asking, "what is faith, love, virtue unassayed" if not demonstrated "Alone, without exterior help sustained" (9.335-36).

Unsurprisingly, the very ideas Eve wishes to test heroically while alone ("faith, love, virtue") all belong to the *vita contemplativa* and thus should be ritually practiced in the shade of home or husband. That Eve's conception of *otium*'s place has shifted is also readily apparent from her asking Adam to

[...] not then suspect our happy state  
 Left so imperfect by the maker wise,  
 As not secure to single or combined.  
 Frail is our happiness, if this be so,  
 And Eden were no Eden thus exposed. (9.337-41)

The self-referentiality of the idea that "Eden were no Eden" epitomizes her new understanding of geography, which treats all of paradise as an undivided unit, ignoring differences of place and function. Insert "hell" for "Eden," and her claim bears an unsettling resemblance to Satan's claim that "Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell" (4.75). In other words, both Satan and Eve believe all places are the same to those who bring to them virtue (Eve's argument) or vice (Satan's argument). Such thinking disregards the strict zoning laws of Eden, which divide between light and dark, thinking and doing. In short, her desire to "divide [their] labors" has the opposite effect of bringing together (i.e., "con-fusing") geographic divisions. Here, Eve is playing God, whose original self-division retired him, sending forth the Son to create the heavens and earth. Unlike the mighty Son, though, whose role was to divide heavens and earth from chaos, Eve's own attempt at heroics ("double honour gain") is based in a geographic merger, not a separation. This confusion of place is simultaneously a confusion of function. Leaving Adam to continue the

physical labor of the field, she will instead find herself in the midst of the forbidden tree, contemplating mysteries untold.

Ultimately, Adam resigns himself to the fact of her leaving, urging her “To be returned by noon amid the bower” (9.401). His fault in acquiescing I discuss at length in Chapter 1. At around noon, however, just when Eve should be making her way back to the bower, Satan instead discovers her wandering in a “flowery plat,” described as her “sweet recess” (9.456). It is not long before Satan convinces her to follow him to the forbidden tree, a journey that “made intricate seem straight” (9.632). This confusion on Satan’s part does not seem to upset Eve, whose dream distorts her notion of place and time. At this point, Eve is doing the very thing that Adam warned against when discussing God’s appointment of “daily work,” “rov[ing] idle unemployed,” like the beasts of the field. Not surprisingly, her leader at this moment *is* a beast of the field. Once they arrive at the forbidden tree, and after some serious finagling, Eve decides to eat the fruit during the “hour of noon,” a time when, by Edenic code, she should be in the shade of the bower (9.739). Dismissing God’s appointment of “body *or* mind,” Eve decides to “reach, and feed at once *both* body *and* mind” (9.779, my italics). In this instant, the division between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* fails, and, along with it, the sacredness of Edenic landscape. Shade and sunlight, a dichotomy that previously regimented their time in Eden suddenly no longer applies, for immediately “Earth felt the wound,” a line that immediately connects Eve’s gustatory action to Eden’s geographical changes (9.782). Much like Eve’s dream, this newly postlapsarian landscape is one of intermixing darkness and light, a chiaroscuro image that allows for the development of Miltonic allegory.

The word “shade” continues to appear after the fall, but its context has changed, and so too its meaning. No longer sacred and literal, shade and shadows now function metaphorically to

indicate the couple's fallen status. Upon their waking from lust-filled sex, the first couple and the poet find the meaning of shade is different, along with their minds:

As from unrest, and each other viewing,  
 Soon found their eyes how opened, and their minds  
 How darkened; innocence, that as a veil  
 Had shadowed them from knowing ill, was gone[.] (9.1052-55)

Once pure, their minds are now figuratively "darkened." Gone, too, is the "veil" of "innocence" that "Had shadowed them from knowing ill." Ironically, a literal shadow has been lifted, ushering in more darkness. This metaphoric understanding of shade also figures into Adam's apostrophe:

O might I here  
 In solitude live savage, in some glade  
 Obscured, where highest woods impenetrable  
 To star or sunlight, spread their umbrage broad  
 And brown as evening: cover me ye pines,  
 Ye cedars, with innumerable boughs  
 Hide me, where I may never see them more. (9.1084-90)

Comparing the "broad / And brown" shade provided by trees to "evening," Adam engages in the same metaphORIZING as the narrator, who next describes the couple searching "thickest wood" for the place where "the Indian herdsman shunning heat / Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing herds / At loopholes cut through thickest shade" (9.1108-10). This shade, provided by the fig leaves, is both actually and metaphorically sewn together to form clothes "to hide / Their guilt and dreaded shame," which is both external and internal (9.1113-14). Without using the word

itself, Mattison also observes Eden's new double nature when noting that "these hiding-places," referring to the thick woods to which they retire, "go two ways at once" insofar as "they provide shelter" while also "represent[ing] a form of disconnection" (122). Though "their shame [is] in part / Covered" in shade, nevertheless, the couple remains without "rest or ease of mind" (9.1119-20). Before, shade functioned as a direct connection with God; now, it serves to hide them from his presence. That which hides them from God also hides God from them, though, creating a division between fallen humanity and the divine that can only be transcended via the shade that mediates it. Shade now functions as a metaphor, that which "carries across" meaning from one side of the divide to the other, and vice versa. A metonym no more, shade transforms into a metaphor, which, extended, becomes full-on allegory in Milton's postlapsarian works.

### Conclusion

Never again will shade function literally and sacredly. As a postlapsarian figure, shade still designates the place of *otium*, but *otium* itself has changed, no longer representing ease and leisure, but instead "intense thought and labor," as Milton styles it in *Tetrachordon*, an intensity that results from its involvement with metaphor and verbal ambiguity. In brief, the shadows of prelapsarian Eden become in Milton's postlapsarian world the shadows of Plato's cave, metaphoric shadows that can only ever approximate the truth they adumbrate. We might say, then, that the "double-formed" sin of *Paradise Lost* (2.741) activates the "double-shade" (1.500) that will enclose the Son in *Paradise Regained*, as well as the "double darkness" (593) of Samson's despair. Ultimately, though, these various darknesses attest to Milton's own shade and the "ever-during dark / Surround[ing]" the blind poet (3.45). Emerging out of Adam's shade, Eve ultimately enters into a metaphoric shadow that also encloses us as fallen readers, and Milton as

a fallen writer. The parallels between Eve's leisurely eating and Milton's belated writing, then, should come as no surprise, given that her confusions of place introduce slippages in language that make writing anything but the "Unmeditated" verse it was in prelapsarian Eden. Whereas Eve once labored to produce fruits, his labor is to produce epic poetry, bringing to fruition literary works that "justify the ways of God to men," and, in this case, the ways of Eve, using fallen and therefore less efficient language (1.26). Yet, Milton also seems to displace at least some of Eve's blame onto himself. In attributing the fall to a misuse of *otium*, Milton expands the *Genesis* myth in ways personally relevant to him, including how best to use one's leisure hours, and when. Her decision gives voice to Milton's fears concerning time management and how to use *otium*. Behind Adam's order "To be returned by noon amid the bower," we can almost hear Milton's third wife, Elizabeth, as she admonishes him for retiring himself from friends and family, hoping to achieve the "immortality of fame" he once described in a letter to Charles Diodati (*YP* 1, 327). Eve certainly achieved hers; and, I would argue, Milton achieved his, too.

### **Allegory and Aloneness in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes***

This chapter continues my analysis of shade and solitude, extending the last chapter's findings concerning *Paradise Lost* to the companion poems, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. In the closing remarks of the previous chapter, I described how the meaning of shade shifts with the fall, as the literal and sacred geography of Eden transforms into the metaphorical and deconsecrated landscape of the postlapsarian world. In this chapter, I resume that discussion of fallen geography as I trace how the metaphorical shade of *Paradise Lost* develops into full-on allegorical thunderstorms in the companion poems, thunderstorms that garner different responses from the Son and Samson. Not only do their responses to climate differ, but their solitudes are different, as well. Samson believes his solitude results from God's abandonment, while the Son understands his as the result of God's elevating him for glorious deeds. Despite these differences, however, both figures end their poems through singular action, either the vanquishing of Satan in *Paradise Regained* or the destruction of the Temple in *Samson Agonistes*. The key to understanding these actions, I argue, is how each character responds to stormy weather, which literally and figuratively forecasts their singularities. Confronted by a storm that is made to appear allegorical, the Son immediately affirms its reality, even while tacitly admitting it *could be* read allegorically. For the Son, who chooses not to interpret it allegorically, the storm is simply wind and rain, and nothing more than that, despite Satan's attempts to persuade him otherwise. In denying allegory, the Son redeems Eve, who applied an allegoric hermeneutic to the sacred geography of Eden. As detailed in the last chapter, Eve learns this hermeneutic from Satan in a dream. Likewise, the Son's storm occurs while he is asleep, suggesting a correlation

between the two events. His triumph, then, is redemptive. Elevated himself, he uses his solitude to uplift fallen humanity.

In *Samson Agonistes*, we find a very different situation. Whereas the Son's solitude culminates in a moment of uplifting, Samson's ends in things brought down, in particular the Philistine Temple, which falls on himself and his captors. The Son's upward movement toward salvation, rendered mimetic through the actions of the angels, who "upbore" him "As on a floating couch through the blithe air," is met with Samson's downward movement toward death and destruction, which creates problems for the reader not found in *Paradise Regained* (4.584-585). Unlike the messiah, whose solitude is the natural extension of his unquestioned exemplarity, Samson clearly struggles with his aloneness, which manifests as a deep melancholy following his failed marriages and subsequent enslavement. If the Son knows God has singled him out for success, whose "matchless deeds express [his] matchless sire," Samson initially believes God has singled him out for failure (1.233). I say "initially" because Samson eventually overcomes his dejection, and he does so upon hearing the brontide of an approaching storm that signals not only Harapha's approach, but also, as I argue, his own final act. Manoa alerts Samson to the storm's approach in a non sequitur following his vitriolic conversation with Dalila. At first, he, too, refuses to assign much meaning to the storm, claiming his "riddling days are past" (1064). Ultimately, though, he reads within the meteorological event an allegory of his own violent end, slaughtering the Philistines "As with the force of winds and waters pent" (1646).

Or so it seems, anyway. In fact, it is the Messenger who encodes the violent act within this stormy conceit, not Samson. As readers, then, we are left to wonder whether Samson read the storm aright, or, indeed, if he read it at all. Whereas critics such as Michael Bryson argue that "Samson's violence can be seen for what it truly is," namely, "a failure of understanding, of

intelligence, and of faith,” I contend that Samson’s violence is entirely *unseen*—and I mean that literally (33). Not only does Milton prevent us from witnessing Samson’s destruction firsthand, he also casts a veil over the Israelite’s final act, encoding it within the Messenger’s stormy story. Opposite the Son, then, who instantly refuses the allegorical import of his storm, Samson’s response to his storm is not immediate, in the sense of “lacking mediation.” Instead, his response is mediated through the Messenger’s mini-allegory, placing the onus on the reader, who must now confront the storm, whose meaning is connected with his act of destruction. As confirmed by the plethora of critical responses to that act, however, there is no consensus over that meaning, nor is it likely there will ever be one. Rather than a fluke, however, I argue this is precisely Milton’s point. He intentionally encodes Samson’s violent act in an impenetrable allegory, which serves to demonstrate that

- 1) we are not the Son, whose immediate response to his storm proves him far superior to the fallen reader,
- 2) that we are not Milton, whose poetic mastery enables him to execute such a difficult allegory,
- 3) and, finally, that we are not each other, whose various responses to the poem confirm our differences from one another, as well as our readerly solitudes.

I will return to each of these strands at various points throughout the chapter, especially the second and third, which comprise my conclusion. Taken together, they extend my discussion of the dissertation’s Introduction, which concerns Miltonic solitude and its postlapsarian function. Adamantly against conformity in both church and state, Milton believes the ideal society is one in which everyone is different, and he sees solitude as both a sign and surety of that difference. In *Samson*, he transfers his desire for politico-religious difference to the domain of aesthetics by

encouraging our critical dissimilitude. Through us, Milton continues to make a difference in the world by inviting different responses to his most enigmatic poem, thereby securing critical nonconformity, which, for Milton, is a guarantor of our solitude. Decrying “*alphabetical servility*” among the English, the last thing Milton wants from his critics is a hegemonic reading of the text that forecloses interpretive possibility, and *Samson Agonistes* is his most powerful statement in that regard (*YP* 2, 280). Though Samson claims his “riddling days are past,” Milton ensures us that ours as critics are far from over.

I use the word “allegory” throughout this chapter somewhat loosely, which, according to Mindele Anne Treip, is also how an early modern reader might have used it, as well. In her view, the word “shade” often functioned as a general synonym for Renaissance allegory, whose purpose was to veil or “shadow” meaning. Noting how the “related words ‘type’ and ‘shadow’ occur a number of times” in *Paradise Lost*, Treip claims that “[b]oth words, but especially ‘shadow’, are of course common Renaissance terms for any kind of allegorical figure” (181). Aware of the correlation between shadow and allegory, Milton redoubles his use of shade in the companion poems, whose darkneses are both literal and figurative. While my primary focus is the darkness of the storms appearing in each poem, it is clear that Milton overtly obnubilates the poems to heighten their overall allegorical feel. He also plays with the meaning of “step,” which can signify the motion of actual feet, as well as metrical feet, whose movement is not simply across the page, but also up and down the semiotic ladder between literal and figurative meanings. Thus, the “wandering steps” (12.648) of Adam and Eve out of Eden become the “step by step” of the Son in a “pathless desert” (1.189; 296), as well as the “dark steps” of Samson (line 3), whose blindness brings him to a place that is both literally and figuratively darkened. Occurring within the first two hundred lines of the companion poems, this emphasis on shade

and shaded footsteps attunes the reader to their allegorical potential, which is dispelled by the Son, and proliferated by Samson.<sup>1</sup>

### I.

That which prompts the Son to deny allegory in *Paradise Regained* also prompts him to refuse the scriptural terms offered by Satan, and so it is with some general claims about the Son's tactics of resistance that I begin. It is obvious that Scripture in the poem functions differently for Satan and the Son. For Satan, Scripture acts as a historical precedent that foretells what the Son ought to do at any given temporal juncture. Many of Satan's queries render scriptural history as a teleology which the Son fulfills. For instance, Satan tells the Son that

thy kingdom though foretold  
By prophet or by angel, unless thou  
Endeavor, as thy father David did,  
Thou never shalt obtain; prediction still  
In all things, and all men, supposes means,  
Without means used, what it predicts revokes. (3.351-356)

Here, Satan figures the Son as the primary agent of historical change, who must obsequiously obey scriptural edict so as to bring about the kingdom of God. Should it be the case that he will one day fulfill scriptural prophecy, and it remains unclear from his response that such an outcome is inevitable, nevertheless, the Son makes clear that now is not the time:

Means I must use thou say'st, prediction else  
Will unpredict and fail me of the throne:  
My time I told thee (and that time for thee

Were better farthest off) is not yet come. (394-397)

While Satan views scriptural history as inevitable, the Son maintains a more dynamic view of his place in time by promoting an ethics that emphasizes *not* the end result, but rather what happens in the interim. Whereas Satan understands Christian history, in which the end has been teleologically forecasted in the beginning, the Son, by contrast, comprehends each passing moment as equally important and relies, as he indicates, on the notion of *kairos*, or “My time.”

This sort of back and forth continues until the poem’s final scene. Satan telekinetically lifts the Son atop a pinnacle and gives him two options. Either the Son can “There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright / Will ask thee skill” or else he can

Cast thyself down; safely if the Son of God:

For it is written, He will give command

Concerning thee to his angels, in their hands

They shall uplift thee. (4.551-558)

As before, Satan tries to use biblical history to coerce the Son into action by claiming that Scripture prophesizes that angels will “uplift” him should he decide to fall. Through his jesting, Satan acknowledges that the excerpt from the Bible describing the Son’s ascension with the help of angels transcends all contexts and therefore must be regarded as having authority in and of itself. Which is to say, Satan views Scripture as *unconditional*, as something akin to the Kantian categorical imperative, to which the Son should necessarily submit as a rational being. Contrary to Satan, who continuously alludes to scriptural truth as self-evident and mandatory, the Son employs biblical history strategically to subdue Satan’s logic by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16: “*Also* it is written, / Tempt not the Lord thy God, he said and stood” (4.560-561, my italics). In

counteracting Satan's appeal with his own equally valid biblical allusion, the Son effectively decenters Satan's imperative, thereby shifting the terms of the debate.

By setting one Bible quote against another, the Son has shown how there is no utterance that transcends all others, but rather that all utterances are firmly embedded in an ever-shifting context. The way to the correct understanding of history, biblical or otherwise, is not through an obsequious submission to the words on the page, as Satan exhibits, but instead the ability to disengage those quotations from their original context and reinterpret them strategically to fit the present circumstances. In this way, he represents the ideal Renaissance reader, whose use of quotations is context-specific. Milton employs a similar hermeneutic to argue that the New Testament prohibition of divorce applied only to the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking at the time, and should not be taken as a universal prohibition of divorce. My point is not that the Son (and, through him, Milton) promotes a relativist mode of interpretation that reduces biblical truth to a rhetorical exercise in marshaling one quote after another in never-ending repartee. That truth is contextual in Milton's thinking does not make him a relativist; truth still requires proofs, and the Son's rebuttal to Satan simply shows the archfiend (as well as the reader) that one biblical quote cannot perforce make a universal law, nor does the search for truth always yield to unity, a fact examined in detail in the first chapter, while discussing Adam and Eve's debate in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost*. This exegetical thinking on the part of Milton explains why the Son modifies his statement with the adverb "also," which indicates that he has added another citational layer to the ongoing textual matrix, and not just uttered an ultimatum, as Satan has done, who "smitten with amazement fell" immediately after the Son responds (4.562). The Son's "also" suggests that meaning making is no longer (nor ever was) a self-evidential phenomenon; instead, meaning is only determinable by establishing spatiotemporal context. That one context is

more propitious than another for evoking biblical history requires a *kairotic* sensibility—namely, the feeling that this particular moment is better suited than any other to invoke what has been written, which the Son effectively demonstrates.<sup>2</sup>

This same refusal to think in categorical terms also informs the Son's denial of allegory. To be clear, the poem is undoubtedly an allegorical one; I am merely saying the Son must act as though it is not. "[T]he magic has gone" from *Paradise Regained*, to adopt David Quint's succinct phrasing, and in its place, I argue, we are left with allegory (183).<sup>3</sup> The narrator alludes to the allegorical doubleness subtending the poem in his earliest description of the Son, who

One day forth walked alone, the spirit leading,  
 And his deep thoughts, the better to converse  
 With solitude, till far from track of men,  
 Thought following thought, and step by step led on,  
 He entered now the bordering desert wild,  
 And with dark shades and rocks environed round,  
 His holy meditations thus pursued. (1.189-195)

To the Son's physical quest into the "desert wild" corresponds a spiritual/conceptual quest, one that cancels out the "Real or allegoric" opposition later proffered by Satan, substituting for it a narrative that is at once real *and* allegoric, as noted by Judith Anderson, among others (4.390).<sup>4</sup> This same negation of binaristic opposites, I contend, is also apparent in Milton's juxtaposition of "dark shades" and "rocks environed round," the mimetic certainty of the rocks rendered uncertain by the metaphoric darkness that obfuscates them. Unlike the sacred shade of unfallen Eden, then, this is a shade whose reconfiguration threatens the poem's very meaning, which now vacillates dangerously between its real and allegoric registers.

The “Real or allegoric” binary that Satan extends to the Son at 4.390 comes after another binary that appears exactly twenty lines before it, in which Satan pronounces the Son unfit for either a “life contemplative, / Or active” (4.370-71). Like the “real or allegoric” binary, this one too is false—the Son lives a life both contemplative *and* active. The certitude of a life divided between “real or allegoric” and “contemplative or active” modes no longer exists in the postlapsarian world. Yet—and this is a very important “yet”—the Son must act as though such certitude *does* still exist, even if it does not. His solitude is such that he must contemplate one thing and act another. To redeem Eve’s metaphorical understanding of *otium*’s place, the Son insists on the univocality of his own contemplative setting, despite the narrator (and Satan too) suggesting the shade that encloses him is a “double-shade,” that is, an allegorical shade (500). Whereas Satan falsely assumes the continued bifurcation of action/contemplation and real/allegory, the Son must recognize that he lives in a world in which such binaries do not exist, while still acting as if they do. Satan assumes the world is “Real or allegoric,” inviting the Son, like Eve, to comprehend his surroundings within the latter category as metaphorical. The Son acknowledges the world is real *and* allegoric, but resolves to see it as only real, in contrast to Eve, who saw it as only allegoric. He stoically reduces the allegorical to the real, as opposed to Eve, whose mistake was to turn a real and sacred place into an allegorical one.

After deploying the active/contemplative and real/allegoric binaries, Satan returns the Son to the wilderness in which he found him, at which point the narrator describes how

Darkness now rose,  
 As daylight sunk, and brought in loursing night,  
 Her shadowy offspring unsubstantial both,  
 Privation mere of light and absent day. (4.397-400)

A seemingly forthright description, the narrator describes how daylight fell, but not before it gave birth to (“brought in”) night, which, along with “darkness,” constitute daylight’s “shadowy offspring.” In what turns out to be a multivalent allusion to *Paradise Lost*, the narrator recalls the moment Lucifer (whose name means “light”) fell from grace, begetting sin, and through his incestuous relationship with sin, brought death into the world. That the narrator describes darkness and night using the adjective “shadowy” evokes the narrative description in *Paradise Lost* of the shapeless forms of Sin and Death, who “shadow seemed / For each seemed either” (2.669-70). The modifier “unsubstantial” likewise agrees in meaning with Satan’s description in *Paradise Lost* of “unessential night,” whose “void profound” he must cross before he can enter into Eden (2.438-39). The “daylight” of line 398 bifurcates and becomes the conjunction of line 400 (“light and absent day”). Whereas the “daylight” of line 398 refers to Satan, by line 400 the metaphorical referent could also be God, whose “Privation” is actually what renders the shapeless forms of darkness and night “unsubstantial.” By intertextually comparing the darkness that encloses the Son of *Paradise Regained* to the darkness found in the hell of *Paradise Lost*, and simultaneously transfiguring the meaning of daylight midverse from Lucifer to the “light and absent day” of God, the narrator invites us to read the passage as metaphorically overdetermined, creating a sense of narrative urgency by confusing the metaphorical referents and forcing the reader to act quickly so as to solve the riddle. In short, the narrator wants us to view the scene allegorically, which, as we shall soon find out, is the same way Satan wants the Son to view it too.

A complicated allegorical interplay, indeed, the foregoing scene is immediately subverted once the narrator relates how

Our saviour meek and with untroubled mind

After his airy jaunt, though hurried sore,  
 Hungry and cold betook him to his rest,  
 Wherever, under some concourse of shades  
 Whose branching arms thick intertwined might shield  
 From dews and damps of night his sheltered head[.] (4.401-06)

Whereas the reader was emplaced by the narrator within a complex intertextual allegory in the previous passage, whose allusions were many and obscure, the Son finds himself in this passage “with untroubled mind,” located “Wherever, under some concourse of shades.” The locational ambiguity of “Wherever” undermines the analogical specificity of the preceding lines, while the imprecision of “some” downplays the significance of the place in which he “might shield” himself from the literal “dews and damps of night.” Momentous and metaphorical becomes mundane and mimetic, as the solivagant Son shows no regard for any hidden meaning in his dark surroundings. His stoical response (“with untroubled mind”) deemphasizes the allegorical implications of his natural setting, which matter far less than the real dark that encloses him while he attempts to sleep. This same stoical response the Son must bring to the dream sequence that occurs next. Not unlike his infiltration of Eve’s dream, Satan reenters the wilderness at this moment to disturb the Son’s sleep with “ugly dreams” that “tempt the Son of God with terrors dire” (4.408, 431). Through his dream, however, the Son demonstrates his awareness of Eve’s oneiric mistake, maintaining the division that she could not by unrelentingly holding on to the real amidst the appearance of allegory.

Despite the narrator’s allegorically intense description, the Son responds indifferently to his dark surroundings, the same response he must also maintain with Satan, who promptly returns and “soon with ugly dreams / Disturbed his sleep” and “rain with lightning mixed, water

and fire,” while also sending winds “From the four hinges of the world” that shook the trees, who “Bowed their stiff necks, loaden with stormy blasts” (4.408-18). Satan picks up where the narrator left off, sending a storm whose allegorical import the Son must likewise resist. Referring to this storm, David Quint notes that “Storms are normally sent in classical epic by an angry deity, but in this reformed Christian poem a storm may just be a storm,” adding that “Jesus acknowledges the natural storm—he has gotten drenched—but not any metaphysical content in its violence” (191-92). True to form, the Son denies the storm’s allegorical content, despite Satan’s attempts to convince him such storms “oft fore-signify and threaten ill” (4.464). According to Satan, the storm functioned as a symbol of the “dangers, and adversities and pains” that will precede his gaining “Israel’s sceptre,” encouraging the Son to project metaphorically such hardships back onto the tempest (4.479-83).

The Son, meanwhile, adamantly refuses to impute to the storm any allegorical meaning whatsoever, his absolute recalcitrance approaching the absolutism with which God refuses blame for the fall in Book 3 of *Paradise Lost*:

Me worse than wet thou find’st not; other harm  
 Those terrors which thou speak’st of, did me none;  
 I never feared they could, though noising loud  
 And threat’ning nigh; what they can do as signs  
 Betokening, or ill boding, I contemn  
 As false portents, not sent from God, but thee;  
 Who knowing I shall reign past thy preventing,  
 Obtrud’st thy offered aid, that I accepting  
 At least might seem to hold all power of thee,

Ambitious spirit, and would'st be thought my God,  
 And storm'st refused, thinking to terrify  
 Me to thy will; desist, thou art discerned  
 And toil'st in vain, nor me in vain molest. (4.486-98)

The Son never denies that wind and rain “can do as signs,” suggesting it is possible for him to read the storm allegorically, should he choose to do so, only that he “contemn[s] [them] / As false portents” when he the “storm'st refused.” The storm, he discreetly admits, is real *and* allegoric, natural *and* artificial, yet his present task requires him to refute its allegoric potential and hold fast to the real. In doing so, he redeems Eve, whose mistake in Book 9 was to read the world through the allegorical hermeneutic provided by Satan in her dream. Whereas the content of Eve's dream supplied her with a new interpretive context with which to understand her world, an argument I made in the previous chapter, the Son outright denounces the dream content, dispelling the idea, adopted by Eve, that the dream could supply an allegorical read of his surroundings. The Son even disavows the dream using some of the same phrases found in the passage describing Eve's dream in *Paradise Lost*, twice referring to his Satanic project as “vain.” The Son refuses all things superficial, a denunciation Eve found herself incapable of performing when bringing her dream-infused and metaphorical understanding of the world to the forbidden tree in Book 9.

## II.

Turning to *Samson Agonistes*, we discover quite another situation, though one that still involves a storm and a partial dismissal. While Samson initially dismisses reading his storm allegorically, claiming his “riddling days are past,” nevertheless, the Messenger reinscribes his

violent end using watery conceit, leaving open the possibility that Samson actually *did* read his future destruction in the storm's brontide (1064). Corroborating this version of events are Samson's "rousing motions," which occur between his first hearing the storm and his stormy finish as described by the Messenger (1382).<sup>5</sup> The following section examines the events leading up to those "rousing motions," as well as the Messenger's encoding the act in allegory. I conclude with a section discussing the implications for the reader of this tripartite tempest, where the brontide of a distant storm becomes Samson's unseen stormy act, which, finally, becomes the stormy conceit of the Messenger's mini-allegory. Be it far from me, however, to imply that I am the first or only person to read *Samson Agonistes* allegorically. Joseph Wittreich argues that the play is not simply a "political allegory but also an allegory of *readings*," in which "any notion of a representative Samson attached to this or that scriptural text is menacing to Milton's own representation" (279-80). He regards the triple simile occurring at the end of the poem, wherein Samson is compared to a dragon, eagle, and phoenix—symbolic figures of regeneration and degeneration, the Son and Satan, the God-sanctioned success of Cromwell and his hubris—as "an active complication of reading, a challenge to interpretation" (267). Similarly, Victoria Kahn argues in *Wayward Contracts* that *Samson Agonistes* is "Milton's allegory of antifoundationalism, of the creative fiat of interpretation in the absence of any more secure or more legible foundation" (253-54). Writing in the context of seventeenth-century contract theory, Kahn insists that the poem "renders the political and theological problem of interpreting the covenant as a poetic problem of interpreting the contract of genre" (270). In this regard, Milton "anticipates modern theories of aesthetics as critique, theories that make the alienation effect of representation itself the condition of ethical and political action" (276). Like Wittreich,

Kahn believes this act of alienation produces a “surplus of possible meanings,” in which the only action still available to the reader is the all-important act of interpretation itself (277).

Both Wittreich and Kahn, then, read *Samson Agonistes* as a political and/or theological allegory that responds to the historical conditions in which it was written, while also resisting any easy interpretation of those conditions. A “challenge to interpretation,” a “surplus of possible meanings,” their understanding of the poem’s inscrutability stems from the respective historical frameworks in which they situate the poem, early modern typology for Wittreich, seventeenth-century contract theory for Kahn. Nor are they alone in finding the poem a difficult text to interpret, as proven by even the most cursory survey of *Samson* criticism. Difficult, indeed, but is the reading of the poem itself a tragedy? For many, including Wittreich and Kahn, this answer is also a resounding “yes.” In answering in the affirmative, however, they assume a parallel between the action *in* the poem and the action of reading it. Samson’s tragedy is our tragedy; his decision becomes our *indecision*; his resolution, our *irresolution*. Whereas they view this situation as a tragic one, I regard the interpretive multiplicity that results from the poem’s indecipherability as consistent with Milton’s understanding of solitude, and therefore a positive outcome. Like Samson, who starts the play assuming God has singled him out, yet ends it in singular fashion, we are made more alone by the poem, and more singular through our different interpretations, and, for Milton, this is desirable. Contrary to Kahn, then, who claims Manoa “misreads the genre Samson has brought to conclusion” by inscribing on his monument a lyric song, I suggest that lyric befits the play, which celebrates our differences from one another, including our interpretive differences over the play’s meaning (275).

Though it ends in celebration, the play opens with the dejection of Samson’s “dark steps,” which take him to a solitary place of either “sun or shade” (2-3). This “unfrequented place,” he

says, allows him “Ease to the body some, none to the mind” (17-18). As it turns out, the option of “sun or shade” is really a false option. He is always in a vexed shade who cannot escape his own tormenting thoughts. Whereas the Son simply knows the “contemplative or active” binary that Satan offers is false, Samson lives that falsity, since little “Ease” comes to his ever-active “body” and “none to” his always contemplating “mind.” It matters not, therefore, where he goes; all places are the same to those who bring to them despair in the form of tormenting thoughts, that “deadly swarm / Of hornets” (19-20). Here, we see Satan’s the-mind-is-its-own-place reasoning at work. Samson’s logic at the beginning of the play is thus similar to Eve’s in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost*. Both Samson and Eve believe that place is unimportant because all places are homogeneous to the virtuous (Eve’s argument) or the despairing (Samson’s argument). Eve employs this logic when departing from Adam, a departure that facilitates the fall; Samson reproduces Eve’s logic at the start of the play, but substitutes his despair for her virtue. Unlike Eve, however, Samson is right in making this claim; he is right precisely *because* Eve was wrong, and in being wrong brought about the fall of man. To the fallen, all places really are the same, a fact Satan of *Paradise Lost* knows all too well, but also the Son, who brings virtue to the scraggly woods, as well as the Lady of Comus, whose chastity saves her amidst a similarly tenebrous setting.

Samson attributes his despairing thoughts to his blindness and the experience of “dark [while] in light” (75). At the outset, this ironic darkness remains literal for him (“O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon”), while doubly ironic for the reader, who is aware of both its literal and figurative dimensions (80). Samson apostrophizes his condition in literal terms, as a loss of physical light:

O first-created beam, and thou great word,

Let there be light, and light was over all;  
 Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?  
 The sun to me is dark  
 And silent as the moon,  
 When she deserts the night  
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave. (83-89)

The assiduous reader will of course detect the figurative dimensions of Samson's darkness, the "first-created beam" referring not only to God's "prime decree," but also his Son, the word made flesh, whose light beam, itself prefiguring the typological wooden beam upon which he will be sacrificed, Samson literally/figuratively cannot see. Samson also seems unaware of the figurative irony of the statement "The sun to me is dark," questioning moments later "why [...] the sight / To such a tender ball as the eye confined" (93-94). In the opening lines of the play, then, the irony of his darkness remains literal/physical, even as he unwittingly compares the absence of the Sun/Son to the silence of the moon.

So despairing is Samson that he begins to contemplate suicide, explaining to Manoa, who maintains hope that light will return to his son's eyes, that he will soon "yield to double darkness nigh at hand" (590-98). If light throughout Milton's texts is affiliated with the laboring body in general, and with the crucified body of Christ in *Samson* in particular, then Samson's use of the phrase "double darkness" signifies the damned body's morbid stasis, its absolute inactivity. The emphasis Samson places on the corporeal (he later compares his blindness to open wounds that, "finding no redress," "Ranke, and fester, and gangrene, / To black mortification") prevents him from realizing his physical blindness is also a metaphoric blindness, and the light denied him is as much or more spiritual as it is material (619-22). At his most despairing, Samson assumes the

“double darkness” of suicide will soon enclose him. While Samson is right about his own impending doom, the play seems to suggest that his darkness will not encreate more darkness. Instead, his physical and spiritual darkness will bring about an internal change, and, “With inward eyes illuminated,” he will bring down the Temple of Dagon (1689).

Altogether, solitary Samson uses some variation on the word “dark” fourteen times in the play’s first six hundred lines and then never again after that, an omission that intimates Samson’s regeneration from a character himself caught in the shadow of allegory to a self-aware allegorical figure who “sees” the shadow around him. He can now read metaphorical figures aright, most importantly the riddle of a storm, its unexpected approach at the end of the play functioning like a *deus ex machina* intervention. This *deus ex machina* designation gains even more credibility after we learn from the Messenger that Samson himself decimated the Philistines like a storm, as though suddenly transformed into self-aware allegorical figure, he played God to his own machinations. Responding to the Chorus’s apparent non-sequitur (“But had we best retire, I see a storm?”), Samson claims that “Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain,” to which the Chorus responds, “But this another kind of tempest brings” (1062-63). Samson then bids the Chorus to “Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past” (1064). Before marrying the woman of Timnah, Samson had sundered a lion, in whose carcass bees then nested, producing honey. The “riddling days” refer back to this event, encoded to the Philistines within the expression, “Out of the eater came meat, out of the strong came sweetness” (*Judges 14: 14*). Referring to this riddle, Samson, like the Son of *Paradise Regained*, initially refuses to interpret the impending storm prophetically. Enough with riddling, he tells the Chorus, and in telling the Chorus this seems to deny allegory too. As noted by Treip, “the concept of allegory as enigmatic secondary discourse or actual riddle had always formed an important element in medieval and earlier Renaissance

views of allegory,” adding later that, “allegory is closer than the other [tropes] to enigma, or perhaps to riddle, in that it is *consciously* misleading” (23, 133).

The stormy riddle Samson seems to deny the Chorus is therefore more than just a riddle; unwittingly, it is a self-referential allegory. Samson *is* the impending storm—to solve the riddle is therefore to solve himself, to know his own role as *deus ex machina*, who will bring about the play’s final action. The storm that Samson initially rejects will become the very storm he unleashes on the Philistines. Though he claims his riddling days are past, it is precisely in realizing the metaphorical import of the storm, effectively solving the riddle, that Samson surmounts his despair and triumphs over his captors. It is only after he learns of the approaching storm from the Messenger that he begins to feel those oft-cited “rousing motions,” and it is my contention that such tempestuous movements are his own realization that the storm of line 1063 is a prefiguration of his own violent act. While certainly possible to read Samson’s “rousing motions” as pertaining to spiritual changes, the foregoing discussion between the Chorus and Samson regarding the impending thunderstorm suggests the “motions” that Samson feels are also a sign of his allegorical transformation into the storm unleashed on the Philistines inside the Temple. In short, these “motions” are as much meteorological as they are spiritual, indicating changes to the weather outside and the weather within.

Though he initially dismisses hearing the storm, in effect denying himself, by the end of the play it is clear the storm prefigured his own violent end. Out of sight, readers of the play are made aware of Samson’s action through the narrative of a Messenger, who returns from the Temple describing a “cloudless thunder” that “bolted on their heads,” referring to his violent act on the Philistines (1696). “[S]training all his nerves,” the Messenger describes how Samson “bowed,”

As with the force of winds and waters pent,  
 When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars  
 With horrible convulsion to and fro,  
 He tugged, he shook, till down they came and drew  
 The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder  
 Upon the heads of all who sat beneath[.] (1646-1652)

The “As” of the simile “As with the force of winds and waters pent” both contains and mitigates the violence of Samson’s act, turning a potentially unnatural, even perverse, event into a mundane and natural one by reducing it to a common meteorological occurrence. Samson’s act is no more violent, unnatural, or unusual than a thunderstorm, according to the Messenger’s account of things, albeit a thunderstorm that terrifies. By placing Samson’s act within the Messenger’s mini-allegory, Milton both distances himself from it (the most immediate author now the Messenger himself), while also forcing readers to come to terms with its violence as something as common as a thunderstorm. As allegory, then, we, the readers, are forced to ask a different set of questions, to work within a different logical framework, as it were. The question is no longer, nor ever really was, whether or not Samson’s violence is justified, but rather whether thunderstorms can be read as good or bad omens, indeed, whether Samson has read his own thunderstorm correctly. That storms can be read as both good and bad omens renders Samson’s awful (in the traditional sense of that word) act utterly ambiguous in meaning. Exacerbating the issue is Manoa’s confounding simile at play’s end that “Samson hath quit himself / like Samson,” a self-reflexive comparison that would not be much of a problem if the Samsonic “self” that is here being reflected were not already rendered allegorical through the Messenger’s previous epic simile (1709-10).<sup>6</sup> A self-referential simile that refers back to a simile

that itself refers back to prophesied thunderstorm, Manoa's line works to complicate an already overdetermined play, which quickly becomes about the act of readings signs, both verbal and phenomenal.

Samson not only shatters the Temple, then; he also shatters any attempt at a universal meaning for the play. For centuries now, critics have played the part of archaeologists, examining the fragments of Samson's destruction, trying to piece together what happened and why. Out of these fragments come various interpretations, some which defend his violence, either on historical or modern grounds, others that outright condemn it, whether through recourse to some transhistorical categorical imperative, or through a close analysis of Milton's own biography, and what motivated him to write the play, and still others that neither defend nor condemn his action, attempting to understand it on its own terms, especially through the question of genre. This proliferation of possible meanings has led some scholars to claim Samson's tragedy is really our own as readers of the play. Ultimately, they claim, we cannot escape this impulse to interpret. As Victoria Kahn writes, "the reader is provoked to a sublime activity of interpretation," consisting of a "strange and fragmentary ostentation that provokes a surplus of interpretation" (276). For Kahn, however, as well as many others, this process is decidedly a tragic one. According to her, Samson's tragedy has become the tragedy of interpretation. But this understanding of the play requires that the reader disavow, among other things, the poem's conclusion and the countervailing firmness of Manoa's resolution to build a monument commemorating Samson's act. Why is Manoa most decided at a time when readers should be most *undecided*? Whereas Kahn claims Manoa "misreads the genre Samson has brought to conclusion" through his inscription of Samson's deeds in lyric song, I offer a different take on the play's conclusion (275). As a commemoration, Manoa's lyric encomium is not a celebration

of Samson's action—which no one, not even Manoa, sees—but the Messenger's "eye-witness" report of his final act (1594). Moreover, the monument itself is intended to "inflare" the breasts of "valiant youth," inspiring others through his lyric retelling of the Messenger's retelling of Samson's reading of a thunderstorm (1738-1739). In other words, Manoa's song celebrates the act of interpretation itself—the things we tell about the things we have heard, whether an eye-witness testimony, or thunder in the distance. Insofar as everyone has their own story, and thus their own story to tell, Manoa's monument is a testament to our interpretative differences, and the solitudes that attend them. It is to these differences—and these solitudes—that I turn now.

### III.

To understand fully the various arguments for and against the possible justice inherent in Samson's violent act, one must also consider what Milton writes in *Christian Doctrine*, which, though written before *Samson* was published, still makes for an insightful comparative. For every statement of love and worldly charity that would seem to categorically preclude Samson's act there is found in Milton's tract a statement equal and opposite in its tenor that advocates religious violence and even hatred of God's enemies. For instance, shortly after defining charity as loving our neighbor as ourselves, claiming "Our enemies are not to be excluded from our charity," he nevertheless goes on to say that "There is some hatred, however, which is a religious duty, as when we hate the enemies of God or the church. [...] or as when we hate even those who are in other respects our nearest and dearest, if they hinder or deter us from the love of God and from our reverence for the true religion" (*YP* 6, 742-43). It is difficult to read these views on hating God's enemies and not think of Samson, who certainly hated the Philistines, and in particular that one Philistine woman, one of his "nearest and dearest," whom he felt had

“hinder[ed] or deter[red]” him “from the love of God and from [his] reverence for the true religion,” to reapply Milton’s expression. “As for war,” which might be said to include the violence Samson performs, Milton writes that “we are instructed, in the first place, that it is to be undertaken only after extremely careful consideration,” but adds that “a cruel enemy should not be spared,” and this right before Milton writes that “we should not trust in the strength of our forces, but in God alone” (*YP* 6, 801-02).<sup>7</sup>

I bring these passages up (and more could be cited) not to justify or condemn Samson’s action outright, but instead to show that, when it comes to Milton’s own beliefs concerning religious charity and violence, he seems quite divided, much as critics have been since the play’s earliest reception. Samuel Johnson and Richard Cumberland describe the catastrophe, respectively, as “just and regular” (102) and of “unparalleled majesty and terrour” (115), while F.M. Krouse in 1949 claims Samson represents a “champion of God” (104). The Romantic William Hazlitt, connecting Samson’s character to Milton’s own politics, wrote that within the hero existed all the “high moral and religious prejudices of [Milton’s] maturer years” (29), a feeling that Kenneth Burke will echo years later when he writes that the play’s violence was the product of a “cantankerous old fighter-priest” (5). This desire—the desire to read *Samson* as a response to the failed Revolution—continues throughout the twentieth century in the work of scholars like Jackie DiSalvo, Christopher Hill, Laura Lunger Knoppers, David Loewenstein, and David Norbrook, among others. Yet, scholars who prefer a less homicidal Milton are quick to separate the violent end of the play from the author’s own politics. Of this critical camp the most famous figure is John Carey, who in 1969 insisted that Samson was a “barbaric foil” to the Christ of *Paradise Regained*, and not a hero to be admired, an opinion he reiterated in the wake of 9/11. Stephen Fallon, meanwhile, returns to the work of Hazlitt and Burke when finding “in this

Samson's late heroism a self-portrait of Milton," noting that "a Samson 'elect above the rest' who has achieved his end and a Samson profoundly fallen and flawed are equally autobiographical and equally implicated in Milton's lifelong project of self-representation" (270). Other scholars, such as Feisal Mohamed and David Lowenstein, seek to rationalize Samson's actions from within the framework of the text and time period. Taking a historical approach, Lowenstein asks us "to consider Milton's poem in relation to the culture of religious terror in the early modern period" (208), ultimately arguing that even though the poem "gives the experience of religious terror a troubling representation," Samson's actions "do not concern terrorist activity" as we currently conceive of it (227). Mohamed, too, regards the poem as "very much a part of the discourse of the revolution in which Milton was engaged" (333). Lingering in the background of many of these more recent assessments is Stanley Fish, who in 2001 made the categorical claim that "the only value we can put on Samson's action is the value he gives in context. Within the situation, it is an expression, however, provisional, of his reading of the divine will; and insofar as it represents his desire to conform to that will, it is a virtuous action. *No other standard for evaluating it exists*" (426).

Ever the lawyer, Fish abides by the same logic that informs modern-day constitutionalists in America, who believe the only way to read that historic document is how the forefathers intended it. To read this way, however, risks reducing a literary text to a legal document completely devoid of aesthetics, whose only purpose is to establish a doomed contract between writer/reader that the reader will inevitably fail because of his or her fallenness. Such a reading practice ignores the many allusions, both intra- and extratextual, that Milton makes throughout his poetry, as John Rumrich also notes when dismissing Fish's determinist methodology. Referring to Milton's characters, Rumrich in *Milton Unbound* criticizes Fish's oversimplifying

approach, writing that “If only the fact of choice matters, [then] the process leading up to it can be distorted without consequence” (13). More to the point, though, Fish’s legalistic approach denies readerly solitude. According to him, we are always already bound by a contractual poetics of Milton’s design, which depends on the sameness of writer/reader, insofar as the reader must be able to think the same way as the poet in order to anticipate his intentions. As discussed in my Introduction, though, Milton is a poet of dissent, not contract, and his poetry intends to showcase our readerly differences, not our ability (whether real or potential) to read the same way. Milton first acknowledges this difference in *Paradise Lost* by setting himself as poet apart from us:

More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged  
 To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,  
 On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues;  
 In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,  
 And solitude[.] (7.23-28)

His most famous use of solitude, this passage marks the insuperable distance occurring between the enshrouded poet, who “as the wakeful bird / Sings darkling, and in the shadiest covert hid / Tunes her nocturnal note,” and the reader, whose darkened solitude results from a missed connection with a poet who refuses to be seen (3.38-40). Acknowledging the “ever-during dark / Surround[ing] me,” Milton registers the difference between the singularly shaded place *from* which he writes, that fanciful “flight / Through utter and middle darkness borne,” and the many shadowy places *about* which he writes, including the shadowy thunderstorm of *Samson Agonistes* (3.45-46). Rather than a contractual poetics, then, which assumes an implicit sameness between writer and reader, Milton asserts his difference from us through a poetics of solitude. In a way, then, the monument Manoa builds for Samson, enclosed within the “shade / Of laurel ever

green, and branching palm,” is also a monument for Milton, who similarly locates himself in the shadows of his own work (1734-1735).

Emphasizing his own solitude, Milton does not—and cannot—know his audience. Not knowing them, he can only place faith in their fitness, a faith he tests to the extreme in *Samson Agonistes*. An isolated writer, writing to an isolated audience, Milton’s estranging poetics of solitude situates readers of *Samson* in a present to which they do not belong, awaiting a poet who will not arrive. In a version of predestination, Milton asks us to read *Samson* as though we already know ourselves members of his poetic approbate, the certainty of our membership corroborated through the freely willed act of reading, which inevitably results in interpretive difference. We affirm ourselves as part of his poetic elect by not affirming it, that is, by allowing that we might not be members, a permanent state of readerly suspension that invites us to revisit the poem, searching for new meaning—new to ourselves and to each other. While it is Milton who must “stand and wait” for his God in Sonnet 18, nevertheless, it is we who must “stand and wait” for Milton, a deferral that I call “teleiopoetic.” Invented by Derrida in reference to Nietzsche’s philosophy, teleiopoiesis designates writing whose intended audience comprises “friends of solitude, [...] inaccessible friends, friends who are alone because they are incomparable and without a common measure, reciprocity or equality,” who will receive his message within “the darkness of a friendship which is not yet” (35, 42-43). As the narrator of *Paradise Lost* states explicitly, and the writer of *Samson Agonistes* encodes allegorically, Milton expects us to be these very sorts of solitary friends, whose friendship is always of the future, and therefore remains a friendship of hope, of expectancy, of things to come. As “friends” of and through Miltonic solitude, we must accept that the poet will always be enshrouded by a shaded solitude, placing him and ourselves beyond the “horizon of recognition,” a good thing, too, since

this distance is precisely what allows us to read the poems anew. In other words, Milton's shaded solitude, his singularity as a poet capable of managing fallen language, is what builds our literary community, or, more aptly, our literary disunity. Our scholarship, as varied as it is, remains a testament to Milton's late arrival, an ever-incomplete documentation of an event that has not happened yet and probably never will. A source of anxiety throughout his poetic career, Milton turns his authorial belatedness and the solitude that results into the source of his inspiration, and that which we must acknowledge to become fit readers who actively "stand and wait."

### **Authorizing Solitude: Lucy Hutchinson and John Milton, Dalila and Samson**

In the previous chapter, I mentioned the idea that the laurel and palm that shade Samson's monument might also shade Milton, whose poetic achievement in allegorizing Samson's final act parallels Samson's own achievement in bringing down the Temple. The present chapter expands on that observation to show that Milton was not the only republican writer locating himself in a poet's shade after the death of a fictionalized hero. At about the same time Milton was busying himself with *Samson Agonistes*, Lucy Hutchinson was writing the *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, a work that finds her occupying an equally tenebrous condition following the death of her husband and fellow republican, John Hutchinson. Here, I refer to the famous and oft-cited passage in the *Memoirs*, in which Hutchinson compares herself to a mirror, claiming her husband "was the author of that virtue he doted on, while she only reflected his glories upon him; all that she was, was him while he was here, and all that she is now is at best but his pale shade" (26). Having written John Hutchinson as a hero of the republican cause, often comparing him to Samson in both the *Memoirs* and the *Elegies*, Lucy Hutchinson repeatedly describes herself as existing in her own "pale shade" after his death. This is first and foremost a funereal shade, a shade of mourning, though, as we shall see, it is ultimately a hero's shade not unlike Milton's, a possibility registered in Robert Walker's portrait of the writer, featuring her holding a wreath of laurel. If John Hutchinson resembles Samson both in look and demeanor, as Lucy Hutchinson suggests throughout the *Memoirs* and *Elegies*, then by documenting those virtues, she assumes the position of author/poet, whose shadowy presence indicates both her personal grief and her poetic achievement, proving, as Penelope Anderson states, that she "is not merely a shadow of

her husband, but also that shadows are not mere at all: they are the locus of memory and monument” (215).

Unlike Milton, however, Hutchinson adamantly refuses this poet’s shade, insisting the solitude in which she writes in fact belongs to a widow, not a writer, and furthermore that widowhood *precludes* her poetic abilities. According to her, solitude actually prevents her from accurately narrating her husband’s virtues, which “will, through my apprehension and expression, shine as under a very thick cloud, which will obscure much of their luster” (16). “His virtues come very much sullied out of my hands,” she later writes, “and, indeed, he that would commemorate his heroic glory should have a soul equally great to conceive and express that which my dejected and inferior spirit cannot perform” (29). As these and other lines attest, however, she never entirely abandons the language of allegory, in this case, of Plato’s cave, believing her husband to be the original, his wife a shadowy copy, “reflecting truly, though but dimly, his own glories upon him,” and her representation of him in the *Memoirs* an even more shadowy copy of *that* copy (52). Though she claims her poetic shortcomings are the result of her “dejected and inferior spirit,” invoking a modesty topos that will appear throughout the *Memoirs* and *Elegies*, I will argue that her self-abnegation forms the basis of a rhetorical strategy that channels the grief and solitude of widowhood into an allegorical reworking of her and her husband’s life together. While the immediate source of the “very thick cloud” may in fact be her widow’s solitude, that cloud also functions to obscure the truth of her husband’s life under a shadow that, as Mindele Anne Treip notes, “was often a synonym for literary allegory” during the early modern period (249). Hutchinson creates allegory from allegoresis, turning a mode of reading Old Testament typologies (allegoresis) into extended metaphors within her own texts (allegory), even referring to this process of textual production by name in the *Memoirs* when

excusing her comparison between Moses and the Colonel (“if we may allegorize the eminent place of suffering into which God called him up at last”) (56). In this way, she is still very much like Milton, who, according to Treip, “continually prob[es] that mysterious barrier, sometimes so delicately slight, sometimes so opaque, which separates ‘shadow’ from concrete reality, image or reflection from original, metaphor or similitude from object of comparison, ‘representation’ from ‘truth,’” making it especially difficult to discern the “real” version of her husband, John, from the allegorical “copy” (201).

Blurring the line between biography and typology through frequent invocation of Old Testament figures when describing her husband, and in particular Samson, whose coif she compares to the Colonel’s own “very fine thickset head of hair,” Hutchinson exploits her role as a defective mirror in order to distort the image of their marriage through allegory, turning that self-described defect into a source of poetic license (*Memoirs*, 87). While most scholars focus on her insubordination in forging the recantation letter for her husband while he was still alive, I argue the more radical subversion occurs after his death, when she uses the solitude provided by a shadow that lingers in his absence to reconstruct their marriage using the story of Samson and Dalila. Seen this way, we must also reconsider her claims of solitude in the *Memoirs* and her elegiac verse. Though she laments solitude throughout her writing, it is precisely what allows the transformation from obscure wife to obscuring author to happen. The shade that covers her following her husband’s death also acts as a public screen, the author and wife disappearing behind the widow’s weeds, while her husband triumphantly emerges within the narrative as a double of a high-minded though ineffectual Samson, and she a conspiring but ultimately sympathetic Dalila figure. Whereas Milton’s Eve wanders away from Adam’s “faithful side” that “still shades [...] and protects” her, Lucy Hutchinson opts to remain within the posthumous

shadow of her husband, using that tenebrous condition as a site of transformation from private wife to public author (9.265-66). While agreeing with N.H. Keeble that there are “two Lucy Hutchinsons in the *Memoirs*,” I nevertheless take issue with his aligning “the obedient wife” with “her husband’s shadow,” while differentiating that shadowy and obedient figure from “the creatively independent, defiant and opinionated narrator who speaks for the former” (254). “For Lucy Hutchinson to write at all,” Keeble argues elsewhere, “was thus to emerge from the shadow of John Hutchinson by laying implicit claim to the prerogatives of the masculine gender” (250).<sup>1</sup> Rather than emerge *out of* that shadow as the narrator, Hutchinson remains decidedly within it, exploiting the ambiguity it provides in order to alter her husband’s image, thereby coming closer to the description of Jonathan Goldberg, who labels her the Colonel’s “shadow writer” (372).

In what follows, I evaluate Hutchinson’s frequent use of typology in the *Memoirs*, particularly the recurring Samson imagery, that we might better understand why Hutchinson prefers to be seen as a mournful Dalila figure, the betrayer of Samson, and not an aspiring writer like Milton, who documents Samson’s heroic deeds. In making herself into a Dalila that betrays her husband in order to save him, Hutchinson actually redeems that figure from the more common (and more negative) portrayal we find in Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*, offering yet another way in which Hutchinson “break[s] with Milton” over gender, as Shannon Miller puts it (116). Discussing *Order and Disorder*, the first epic written in English by a woman, Miller argues that Hutchinson parts way with Milton by “expand[ing] the power of the mother within the context of marriage, combining a significant rewriting of Genesis with a gesture toward revisions within contemporary marriage laws” (116). Similarly, I argue that Hutchinson in the *Memoirs* and the *Elegies* rethinks the Samson narrative, expanding Dalila’s power, and in doing so empowering herself as an author, a process made easier by the solitude she experiences upon

her husband's death. While her husband might be read as "Milton's Samson," a connection made by Keeble in the introduction to the *Everyman* edition of the *Memoirs*, nevertheless, she is decidedly *not* Milton's Dalila (xxiii). In some ways, then, this chapter constitutes an extension of Pamela Hammons's claim that, at least in her *Elegies*, Hutchinson demonstrates an "awareness of her vulnerability to negative stereotyping as a newly widowed woman and use[s] complex poetic strategies in an effort to foreclose her possible association with that caricature" (433). Unlike Hammons, though, I believe Hutchinson's writing is significantly more radical than her more conservative analysis would seem to permit. Hutchinson is not simply performing damage control in the elegies, attempting to salvage her own reputation from the unbecoming "caricature" of a widow. Falsely rendering John Hutchinson when he was still alive, Lucy Hutchinson takes even more creative license after his death, using the distance she gains as a solitary widow to allegorize him and herself into a new marital relation. The solitude of widowhood is thus both authorizing and authorized in Lucy Hutchinson's writing, and especially in her elegies, serving as the shaded site in which her authority develops, but also the primary subject of her authorship once it is established. If Miltonic solitude coincides with moments of creation, as discussed at length in my Introduction, then Hutchinson's solitary revisionism proves her of kindred spirit. For Hutchinson, as for Milton, solitude invites nonconformity, and while they would certainly dispute their very different representations of Dalila, nevertheless, their disagreement is not itself an issue. In fact, it is a sign of their shared commitment to the project of producing meaningful difference in and through solitude.

## I.

Hutchinson's rhetorical strategy—her using a widow's solitude as a reason to write as well as an excuse for the purportedly bad writing she produces—is all the more striking given her general stance toward the life alone as conveyed throughout her other works. In *Order and Disorder*, for instance, Hutchinson abides by a fairly conventional reading of the Genesis narrative concerning Adam's creation and desire for a mate. Whereas Milton glosses Genesis 2:28 in *Paradise Lost* in a somewhat perfunctory manner, Hutchinson both glosses the passage and substantially adds to it, claiming that

tis not particularly good  
 For man to waste his life in solitude,  
 Whose nature, for society designed,  
 Can no full joy without a second find  
 To whom he may communicate his heart,  
 And pay back all the pleasures they impart;  
 For all the joys that we enjoy alone,  
 And all our unseen lustre, is as none. (3.333-340)

If Adam's solitude is negative, as Hutchinson here suggests, then even worse is the solitude of those "Who into caves and deserts run away, / Seeking perfection in that state wherein / A good was wanting when man had no sin" (3.322-324). Building on Aristotle's political philosophy, and the idea that humans were "for society designed," Hutchinson uses this moment in the poem to censure anchorites, who seek sanctuary in secluded settings like a cave or desert. Here, she implies that anchorites and other kinds of recluses seek a state of perfection that Adam himself was unable to attain, and thus their project is ideologically bankrupt. "A good was wanting," she

writes, even in that ideal condition into which Adam was born; how much more, then, is that good wanting during the fallen times in which she writes.

This stance against solitude turns up again in the *Memoirs* and *Elegies*, during her discussion of the Colonel's imprisonment. In both texts, Hutchinson condemns what she calls her husband's wrongful incarceration, lamenting his solitude, while also championing his paramount virtues in the face of an undeserved punishment. Imprisoned in the dank and rundown Sandown Castle, his primary "business" at this time, according to Lucy Hutchinson,

and continual study was the Scripture, which the more he conversed in, the more it delighted him; insomuch that his wife having brought down some books to entertain him in his solitude, he thanked her, and told her that if he should continue as long as he lived in prison, he would read nothing there but his Bible. (321)

Even as she denounces the forced solitude her husband experiences, Hutchinson with equal and opposite vigor upraises him for his perfect endurance of it. Hutchinson describes, in a paean to her husband's martyrdom, how his "study of the Scriptures did infinitely ravish his soul and refine it and take it off from all lower exercise, and he continued it in his sickness even to the last, desiring his brother, when he was in bed and could not read himself, to read to him" (328).

A moving description, this portrait of the Colonel extends her declared purpose in writing, which is to demonstrate to all future generations, and especially her children, the nonpareil virtue of the husband after his death. However, she also admits an inability to create an accurate portrait of her husband, whose virtues exceed her capacity to write them down. So, is this, then, the besmirched portrait, indeed, the only portrait she claims she is capable of writing? Furthermore, if solitude provides the Colonel the opportunity to study the Scripture, how does it differ from those anchorites she derides in *Order and Disorder*, "Who into caves and deserts run away, /

Seeking perfection”? It seems the Colonel is engaged in the very same action she elsewhere denigrates.

The answers to these questions require an understanding of how solitude and gender interrelate throughout Hutchinson’s works. Initially, her view of solitude would seem to bolster an argument supporting feminine weakness. I say “seem” because, as I plan to suggest, the very fact that she writes at all, an activity that necessarily involves time spent alone, contradicts whatever negative claims she makes about female solitude. Yet, make those claims she does. When documenting the fall from grace, for instance, the narrator of *Order and Disorder* writes that Eve gave Satan “opportunity” by “coming there alone / So to be first and easier overthrown,” and, moreover, that

th’ assault had not been made  
Had she not from her firm protection stray’d;  
But so the Devil then, so leud men now  
Prevail, when women privacies allow. (4-169-174)

At first glance, these lines seem unequivocally to support a position of female subordination, even suggesting that the fall itself would not have occurred at all, had not Eve from her “firm protection stray’d.” If, however, we look not just to the words themselves, but also the context in which they were written, a different image emerges, one of a female writer, who, writing alone, and many years after the Colonel, her own “firm protection,” had died, denounces female privacy. In other words, we must read within these gendered lines some level of irony, an irony that simply could not be lost on someone as intellectually gifted as the woman who wrote them. I see Hutchinson using the possibility of feminine weakness, and the idea that, while alone, women are more susceptible than their male counterparts to the workings of the devil, as an

implicit justification for her supposedly distorted image of the Colonel. In choosing to write alone, Hutchinson intentionally opens herself to the very caricature of females that she depicts in *Order and Disorder*, exploiting the image of female inferiority to justify whatever so-called “flubs” appear in her writing. Much the same way she uses the Colonel’s involuntary imprisonment as an opportunity to showcase his Christian piety, and, with more subtlety, his perseverance in the Good Old Cause, Lucy Hutchinson uses her involuntary solitude to emphasize certain traits about her own person. However, the traits she chooses to emphasize are not, as they are for her husband, those of Christian piety, but rather feminine weakness. If we are skeptical of her aggrandized portrait of the Colonel, as, I think, we should be, then all the more skeptical we should be regarding her claims to feminine inferiority, especially since the only basis for those claims is the writing in which those claims appear. Through an interesting (and, I would argue, intentional) rhetorical setup, the better she writes, the better she will convey in prose and poetry her own feminine inferiority; yet, the better she writes, the less likely we are to believe the very inferiority her words intend to convey. To put it simply, the more we believe her writing, the less we (can or should) believe her.

Through the hyperbolic language she uses when discussing her husband’s heavenly transformation during his enforced solitude in prison, Hutchinson directs readers’ attention away from a transformation that she herself catalyzes as a writer working within the confines of a widow’s solitude. In the *Elegies*, for instance, she positions herself as a writer simultaneously public and private. As Sharon Achinstein remarks, referring to Hutchinson’s second elegy, in which the speaker chastises the Sun for attempting to creep into her window and witness her mourning, “There is no place for the sun in her inner world of grief, a world that remains, finally, private even though that which it mourns is a ‘Publick funerall’” (71). “Hutchinson herself feels

too visible,” Achinstein continues, and thus “she wishes to remain in darkness,” turning this desire to “remain in the shadows” into a “political challenge” against the restoration of Charles II (71-72). I would only add to Achinstein’s reading that the “our” of the poem’s penultimate line (“Which from our Eies in Secrett fall”) complicates any clear sense of a private/public divide; in royal form, the pronoun “our” closes off Hutchinson from the public’s prying eye, while, in the inclusive form, it invites her readers to mourn along with her in a public display of sorrow.<sup>2</sup>

By reframing her solitude as an imagined space of public mourning, Hutchinson prepares readers for a similar authorial move that finds her obscured by the shadow of allegory, as she reworks public narratives such as the Samson story to fit her own conception of her marriage to the Colonel. The tendency to identify life events as the fulfillment of biblical precedent is common in the period, though, I would argue, Hutchinson’s self-identification with Dalila is rather unique for a woman writer, and thus invites a prolonged study. Shadow is not merely funereal in her works; it functions, much as it does in Milton’s poetry, as a space of concealment that turns apparent grief to literary ends. Her wish not to be seen, and the feminine apologetics that recur throughout her works, do not correspond with a genuine belief in her own inferiority, but instead act as a ploy to keep us from focusing on her marital revisionism. If Hutchinson is in fact a Dalila figure, it is not in the way she describes. Her deception of her husband through the supposed forgery of the letter pales in comparison to the many acts of deception that occur throughout her writing, deceptions that seek to focus our attention on her mourning, and how that mourning supposedly tarnishes her writing, enabling her to present herself as a widow who idealizes her husband while debasing herself.

Few scholars comment on the fact that Lucy Hutchinson compares her husband to Samson (among other biblical figures), and those who do tend to follow David Norbrook in

describing Hutchinson's allusions as just that—allusions. Writing of "Elegy 6," for instance, Norbrook claims the "poem's climax appropriately evokes Samson's iconoclasm as an image for [John] Hutchinson's fall and exaltation," but neglects to move beyond this arguable (is Samson really a smasher of images?) and tangential remark (384). One exception to this scholarly trend is Penelope Anderson, who ventures a cogent explanation of how Hutchinson's typologies are inextricably implicated in a larger strategy of self-presentation involving companionate marriage. Reading her recantation letter alongside Richard Brathwaite's *The English Gentlemen* (1630), Anderson argues that Hutchinson arrogates to herself the Samson and Dalilah narrative originally found in Brathwaite's work, "present[ing] herself as the negative other of friendship, the wife who is the false counselor, in order to sacrifice herself for her friend, like the republican friends who rebel against the tyrant" (202). But Anderson's reading is also complicated by the fact that Lucy Hutchinson was not a friend—neither false nor true—when she wrote the sections of the *Memoirs* dealing with her sorrowful and shadowed existence.<sup>3</sup> Rather, her status at that time was solitary widow, and it is in her capacity as widow that we must read the Samson and Dalila narrative, for it is her "dejected and inferior spirit" that, in my reading, authorizes her to allegorize the account in the first place. The Samson/Dalila undercurrent throughout the *Memoirs* is as much an attempt on Hutchinson's part to rethink her marital role as it is to assert herself as the author of that marriage, using the solitude in which she finds herself after her husband's death as a pretext for her "cloudy" vision of their lives together.

It would behoove us, then, to reconsider her typologies, that is, her locating Old Testament figures in contemporary Puritan life, as the result of a self-actualizing and solitary author rather than a self-abnegating friend or wife. To do that, we must revisit the allegorical doubles appearing in her work, so as to trace them back to the singular author that wrote them.

This doubleness especially appears in her early descriptions of her husband. The Colonel's upbringing and moment of divine revelation, for instance, Hutchinson compares to that of Moses, asserting

God took this time to instruct [Mr Hutchinson], when he had given him rest from the passions which commonly distract young people and sequestered him into a private life before he had yet many domestic concerns to divert his mind. If small things may be compared with great, it seems to me not unlike the preparation of Moses in the wilderness with his father-in-law, where it is thought he writ the book of Genesis, and some believe that of Job (54).

Using a double negative (“not unlike”) to render her husband's private study the typological fulfillment of Moses' sojourn in the wilderness, Hutchinson locates in Moses a prefiguration of her husband's future actions, while also providing readers a new context with which to understand her previous declarations concerning writerly inadequacies. That which appears as a modesty topos in the opening pages of the *Memoirs* (her husband will “shine as under a very thick cloud, which will obscure much of their luster”) can now be read as an understated testament to her writerly ability. Her description does, in fact, “shine” in the narrative, all the more so *because* it is under the “thick cloud” of allegory. If her husband appears obscured, it is not only (or ever) because Lucy Hutchinson cannot produce an accurate portrait of her husband, but instead because she actively seeks to show John Hutchinson as other than he actually is or was, transforming him into the fulfillment of various biblical identities, including, but not limited to, Moses.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, Hutchinson obliquely admits to this project later in the same paragraph, while discussing her husband's imprisonment following the Restoration, on what was likely trumped

up charges of conspiracy to overthrow once again the government. Recalling his time in prison, Hutchinson writes that

Mr Hutchinson again might often take up the parallel of the great Hebrew Prince [Moses]; and if we may allegorize the eminent place of suffering into which God called him up at last, there it was in the bleak mountains of affliction that the Lord instructed him in his law, and showed him a pattern of his glorious tabernacle, and gave him a fuller discovery of his person (56).

Of course, the appearance of the word “allegorize” does not an allegory make. Yet, alongside her other “parallel” to Moses, as well as the opening claims to obfuscation, we begin to discern the full extent of Lucy Hutchinson’s project in the *Memoirs*. She does not just provide us with the facts about her husband’s life, but also the meta-narrative through which to read and assign moral value to them. As Derek Hirst makes mention, “Mrs Hutchinson declared her resolve to leave a portrait of her husband to their children, and, partisan and idealist as she was, she coloured that portrait and rewrote the history of 1660 to rescue his memory” (269). More than just coloring that portrait, however, Lucy Hutchinson has readers color it for her, providing them the allegorical metatext that will then guide their moral interpretation. In doing so, she proves herself a competent and well-read writer, a person more in agreement with the bookish Lucy Hutchinson to whom John Hutchinson was first attracted, and which she describes at the outset of the *Memoirs*. There, she describes herself in paradoxical terms, both as a gifted scholar and an unrefined lady, the very same persona she once again adopts after her husband’s passing, using the pretext of an uncultured lady to divert attention away from the aesthetic merits of the work.

Her penchant for Old Testament allegorizing finds Hutchinson among many nonconformist writers in the seventeenth century, nearly all of them male, who routinely invoke

Moses, Abraham, and Samson as archetypal models for their own progress as Christians. “To the Puritan and nonconformist mind,” remarks Keeble in *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, “both personal history and national English history were comprehensible only in terms of Israel’s history, and, since the latter was as vividly present to their imagination as the former, it offered not only an interpretive key but a narrative model” (264). Keeble continues, suggesting the “mode of nonconformist story [...] is at once realistic, allegorical in the old medieval sense, picturing forth theological abstractions, and symbolic in the manner of modern subjectivism, investing particular experiences with figurative significance” (264). By repeatedly alluding to Moses and his prefigurative likeness to her husband, Lucy Hutchinson situates her *Memoirs* within a highly recognizable narratological structure, one that has special resonance for nonconformists living in Restoration England, while simultaneously identifying herself as a capable female author working within an almost exclusively male literary tradition. As a submissive wife, she desires to be seen as living in the shadows of this tradition, yet her formal use of shadow and shading in the *Memoirs* ironically proves her knowledgeable of its most defining literary convention, as evidenced in such works as Thomas Taylor’s 1635 *Christ Revealed: or the Types and Shadows of Our Savior in the Old Testament*. Beyond the title, which directly connects the use of shadow and typology, Taylor dedicates a fair amount of time to proving the homology between Moses and Christ, much as Hutchinson will after him, reading in Moses a similar prefiguration of her savior-husband.

While Moses is the most obvious Old Testament prefiguration of John Hutchinson, the most important is Samson, a superlative that holds true for other seventeenth-century texts as well. In addition to Lucy Hutchinson’s *Memoirs*, the Samson narrative appears in the tracts of many other writers of the period, both royalist and republican alike. Of all these renderings,

Milton's treatment of the narrative in *Samson Agonistes*, which recruits the Nazarite for the republican cause, either as a model of virtue or else a cautionary tale, remains the best-known appropriation of the story, though it is not the first time he avails himself of the Book of Judges. I am referring to Milton's polemical rejoinder to King Charles's propaganda piece, *Eikon Basilike*. In that piece, the king arrogates to himself the Samson story when claiming the willful resignation of his royal power would be "as if *Sampson* should have consented, not only to bind his owne hands, and cut off his hair, but to put out his own eyes, that the *Philistins* might with the more safety mock, and abuse him; which they chose rather to doe, then quite to destroy him, when he was become so tame an object, & fit occasion for their sport and scorne" (69). Milton counters in *Eikonoklastes*, belittling the king's comparison when claiming that "*The words of a King*, as they are *full of power*, in the authority and strength of Law, so like *Sampson*, without the strength of that *Nazarites* lock," which, through the parallelism, refers to the Parliament-created English law, "they have no more power in them than the words of another man" (YP 3, 545-546). Redeeming Samson for the republican cause, Milton takes care to show how the Nazarite's strength resides metonymically in his hair, described in *The Reason of Church-Government* as "those his illustrious and sunny locks the laws waving and curling about his god like shoulders" (YP 1, 859).<sup>5</sup>

Though not referring to Samson by name, Lucy Hutchinson also alludes to his narrative several times in the *Memoirs*, and again in the *Elegies*, as Norbrook and others have pointed out, and in so doing hails him (and by proxy, her husband) a champion of the republican cause. Often, her Samson references specifically concern the Colonel's hair. "Though his zeal for truth and virtue caused the wicked, with the sharp razors of their malicious tongues, to attempt to shave off the glories from his head," she triumphantly states in the *Memoirs*, "yet his honour

springing from the fast root of virtue did but grow the thicker and more beautiful for all their endeavors to cut it off” (28). Like Samson, whose strength resided in his hair, John Hutchinson refused to be metaphorically shorn of his greatest attributes, his “zeal for truth and virtue,” choosing to remain unshorn. Hutchinson’s emphasis on the Colonel’s unshaven coif picks up again later, when she describes how his eccentric cut excluded him from the designation “Roundhead,” applied to Puritans at the time. As before, his locks represent more than a fashion statement, actually unlocking, as it were, ideological commitments:

Two or three years after, any stranger that had seen [the Roundheads], would have enquired the reason of that name, which was very ill applied to Mr Hutchinson, who having a very fine thickset head of hair, kept it clean and handsome without any affectation, so that it was a great ornament to him, although the godly of those days, when he embraced their party, would not allow him to be religious because his hair was not in their cut nor his words in their phrase, nor such little formalities altogether fitted to their humour; who, were, many of them, so weak as to esteem rather for such insignificant circumstances than for solid wisdom, piety, and courage, which brought real aid and honour to their party (87).

Again aligning ideal appearance (“a very fine thickset head of hair”) with the appearance of ideals (“wisdom, piety, and courage”), Hutchinson narrowly avoids idolatry by Puritan standards when boasting of her husband’s “great ornament,” which he kept “clean and handsome without any affectation.” While the Colonel’s hair might be a physical manifestation of probity, Lucy Hutchinson’s dotting on that fact renders her vulnerable to accusations of idol-worship.

This trend continues in the *Elegies*, especially numbers six, nine, and eighteen. The first of these—“Elegy 6”—offers the most sustained comparison, ending with the couplet “And like

great Sampson dying Threw downe more / Then he had vanquisht all his life before,” though the other elegies—nine and eighteen—repeatedly return to the Samson narrative, with passing references to the Colonel’s hair, chains, deceitful women, champions, and pillars (67-68). Alongside the aforementioned allusions to Samson in the *Memoirs*, these references in the elegies form a theme across time and genres, in which Hutchinson repeatedly compares her husband to the Nazarite hero. The story of a virtuous husband and an admiring and ambitious wife, the Samson narrative undergoes a significant revision by Lucy Hutchinson to accommodate her own personal experiences during the Restoration. In claiming her husband “despised nothing of the female sex but their follies and vanities; wise and virtuous women he loved, and delighted in all pure, holy and unblamable conversation with them, but so as never to excite scandal or temptation,” Lucy Hutchinson prepares readers for her own folly in deceiving him by forging a recantation letter in his name, effectively preventing the Colonel from becoming the Samsonic martyr he desired to be (30).

Rather than make him a martyr by revealing the source of his secret strength, as Dalilah does in the Book of Judges, Hutchinson betrays her husband by *preventing* his martyrdom, thereby reversing the more traditional Samson narrative found in Milton, where martyrdom is figured in some ways as a reputation-saver after the Nazarite’s uxorious dealings with foreign women. This reversal in effect renders the Colonel a passive figure, a Samson who passively retires to a countryside prison, while his wife emerges the true heroine, disobeying her husband to save him from a damning act of self-incrimination. “Even though she massively idealizes her husband,” observes David Norbrook, “he consistently emerges from her narrative as a kind of anti-hero, waiting on events, subject to others’ agendas, his actions acquiring a providential luster only with hindsight” (245). What might otherwise seem a contradiction, this portrayal of

an ineffectual husband makes sense when viewed as an intentional reworking of the Samson narrative, in which the Dalilah figure appears honorable for having betrayed her husband. This, I would argue, is part and parcel of her larger authorial strategy to sublimate the gloom she experiences following his death into a revisionist tale in which she betrays her husband in order to save him from the martyrdom he so desperately desires. In reversing the Samson narrative, Lucy Hutchinson emerges the story's true hero, and also the person who must write about it, even as her husband went on to encounter not a glorious or heroic death, but rather a slow decline in a drafty prison.

The rewriting of the Samson narrative inevitably brings Dalilean undertones to Hutchinson's description of the forged letter. Writing of herself in the third-person, she claims that

Mrs Hutchinson, whom to keep quiet her husband had hitherto persuaded that no man would lose or suffer by this change, at this beginning was awakened, and saw that he was ambitious of being a public sacrifice, and therefore, herein only in her whole life, resolved to disobey him, and to improve all the affection he had to her for his safety, and prevailed with him to retire; for she said she would not live to see him a prisoner. (280)

From a woman in the early modern period, this description carries with it strong connotations of feminine chicanery, reminding us once again what Penelope Anderson says about Hutchinson playing the role of a "false counselor." In the context of allegory, however, these lines place Hutchinson in the more specific role of a new Dalilah, who deceives her husband by "prevail[ing] with him to retire" to the countryside, which provided her the opportunity to forge the recantation letter, an act that deprives the Colonel of "wisdom, courage, and piety" in the public eye, virtues symbolically attached to his Samsonic hair. Insofar as "she would not live to

see him a prisoner,” Hutchinson metaphorically shores the very locks of virtue she elsewhere works to grow in the reader’s mind. Choosing her own death before her husband’s imprisonment, Hutchinson elevates herself to the status of heroine, who preempts the Colonel’s would-be martyrdom by actively and knowingly betraying him. If Lucy Hutchinson represents herself as a “pale shade” of her husband following his imprisonment and subsequent death, it is not just because she mourns for him, but also because she metaphorically died when failing to secure his freedom. Because, according to her own script (and, in this case, Scripture), she “would not live to see him a prisoner,” she therefore must die after he becomes one, her own heroic plot having been foiled by the powers that be. The pale shade she occupies has as much to do with her own tragic story of a failed redemption as it does with the Colonel’s demise. I will return to this idea in the third section, which deals with the *Elegies*.

Deception appears a few pages later, when Hutchinson describes the specifics of her forgery. After convincing him not to surrender himself, Hutchinson then

devised a way to try the House, and writ a letter in his name to the Speaker, to urge what might be in his favour, and to let him know that by reason of some inconvenience it might be to him, he desired not to come under custody, and yet should be ready to appear at their call; and if they intended any mercy to him, he begged they would begin it in permitting him his liberty upon his parole till they should finally determine him. Which letter she conceived would try the temper of the House; if they granted this, she had her end, for he was still free; if they denied it, she might be satisfied in keeping him from surrendering himself. (281)

The actual contents of the letter, of course, tell a much different story, wherein the Colonel appears an especially remorseful character, who openly regrets his service to the republican

forces. Whether Lucy Hutchinson actually forged this letter or just claimed to have forged it, the fact remains that her account of it in the *Memoirs* “must call into question her obtrusive self-characterization as the epitome of wifely duty and dependence,” as Derek Hirst so succinctly puts it (690). Read in the context of the Samson narrative, Hutchinson would seem to rationalize her disobedience through recourse to the archetypal disobedient wife, Dalilah, while also subtly redeeming that biblical character from centuries of misogynistic vitriol. “[H]ad not his wife persuaded him, [he] had offered himself a voluntary sacrifice,” she writes a little later, which, extracted from its immediate context in the *Memoirs*, reveals a striking reversal to the Book of Judges, wherein Samson becomes a “sacrifice” (though not voluntarily, of course) precisely *because* he was previously duped (or “persuaded”) by his conniving wife (286). We may better understand that reversal by comparing Hutchinson’s rendering of Dalila with contemporary representations, including Milton’s in *Samson Agonistes*.

## II.

Negative portrayals of Dalilah abound in early modern England, the biblical story often used as a warning for women about how *not* to behave. The epigrammatist John Owen sums up the opinions of “many men” in 1619 when he writes that

*Samsons* deceitfull *Dalilah*,  
 His *Strength* in’s *Haire* destroyed·  
 In these dayes, by such *Dalilahs*  
 Are *many-men* annoyed. (“Epigram 12”)

Owen claims to represent a real-life masculine majority, for whom Dalila symbolizes the waywardness of numerous English wives, demonstrating the story’s use in perpetuating English

stereotypes about the fickleness of women. This misogyny even finds its way into the writing of early modern women, too, in particular the prophetic discourse of Lady Eleanor Davies, whose petition to the House in 1643, entitled “Samsons Legacie,” warns that King Charles I and his wife, the Spanish Henrietta Maria, are unknowingly acting out the Samson story. In her account, a tract written in the confusing prose of prophecy, the seven locks of hair on Samson’s hand, metaphorically shaved off by his wife, have been replaced by the “false hair,” by which she means the wigs worn by royalists:

Fastend this also on our Effeminate time, his seven Locks, Left to this last hundred year: shewing what weaving and curling we have of FALSEHAIRE, by that going away of His, with the Webbe fastend to the Beame; whose locks therein woven by her: who said; Thou sayest false, (or) hast mocked mee, &c. Expressing how men forbidden expresly long Haire, yet the sonnes of God will weare it: some of them looking thereby more like the sonns of Divels. (92-93)

Referring to “our Effeminate time,” Lady Davies greatly expands the purview of Dalila’s deception, which is no longer limited to a few wayward women, but now appears interwoven into the temporal fabric of the seventeenth century itself, rendering gender obsolete by effeminizing men both morally and physically. How ironic that a woman who condemns the effeminacy of the times should herself attempt to convince an all-male Parliament of that fact by recourse to the Samson narrative, a story that blatantly cautions against listening to women. A religious fanatic and general termagant, who was personally despised by King Charles and many others in government, confined to Bedlam in 1636 for destruction of church property at Lichfield and later imprisoned in the Tower, Lady Davies was probably not in the best position to advocate for the Samson story, appearing too much like the untrustworthy woman she condemns

throughout the tract. If Hutchinson succeeds in using the Samson narrative where Lady Davies failed, it is in part because she takes the exact opposite approach, appearing so *unlike* Dalila in her personal life that her use of that figure in the *Memoirs* and *Elegies* is that much more salient. Hers is a widow's solitude, and thus she gains authority through mourning, whereas Lady Davies's solitude is that of a supposed madwoman, whose writing cannot be trusted.

Milton's Dalila certainly shares many of the same negative attributes as other seventeenth-century versions, yet she fares the worst not in the play itself, but among the play's future critics, who want her to be many things, but rarely a redeemable figure.<sup>6</sup> To redeem Dalila from some of her harshest critics we need not look further than the play itself, and her claim that "to the public good / Private respects must yield," which sounds uncannily similar to Milton's immediate rationale for writing *Eikonoklastes*. As Secretary of Foreign Tongues, the official title granted to Milton during the Interregnum, he writes in the preface to *Eikonoklates* that "I take it on me as a work assign'd rather, then by me chos'n or affected," considering it his public duty to expose, point by point, the supposedly false portrait of the deceased king in *Eikon Basilike* (YP 3, 339). Lest this comparison seem overhasty, it might be objected that Dalila also desires fame, whereas Milton does not. For instance, she claims that

Fame if not double-faced is double-mouthed,  
 And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds,  
 On both his wings, one black, the other white,  
 Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.  
 My name perhaps among the circumcised  
 In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,  
 To all posterity may stand defamed,

With malediction mentioned, and the blot  
 Of falsehood most unconjugal traduced.  
 But in my country where I most desire,  
 In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath  
 I shall be named among the famousest  
 Of women, sung at solemn festivals,  
 Living and dead recorded, who to save  
 Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose  
 Above the faith of wedlock-bands my tomb  
 With odours visited and annual flowers. (971-987)

Yet, Milton also makes the case for fame. Though he seems to declare it against his purpose to achieve fame in this political tract (“I never was so thirsty after Fame, nor so destitute of other hopes and means, better and more certaine to attaine it”), he nevertheless allows for “other hopes and means” to achieve it, namely, his poetry (*YP* 3, 337). In fact, Milton states explicitly his desire for poetic fame in a 1637 letter to his friend, Charles Diodati.<sup>7</sup> Such claims to fame and service to the public, which are by no means exclusive practices, even if Milton tries to separate them in the preface to *Eikonoklastes*, render him even more like his Dalila, whose final monologue has her once again defending her actions by similar means. Choosing “to save her country from a fierce destroyer,” and in doing so neglect the “wedlock-bands,” Dalila is an amalgam of the republican Milton, his deserting wife, Mary Powell, as well as Samson himself, who likewise saves his country from a “fierce destroyer,” finding his own name inscribed on monuments and song, proving, as Catherine Gimelli Martin states, that Milton “overturns the

conventional system in which intrinsically inferior women are innately subject to men” by making them “negotiating partners” at this moment of pseudo-divorce (60).

For all her redeeming qualities, however, Dalila still suffers in Milton’s account, with the Chorus and Samson getting the final word, the former labeling her a “manifest serpent by her sting / Discovered in the end, till now concealed,” after which Samson says that “God sent her to debase me” (997-999). Though Milton elsewhere shows himself almost endlessly capable of revamping biblical narrative in creative and unorthodox ways, most famously in *Paradise Lost*, an epic elaboration on just a few short passages from Genesis, here he falls back on the original script, seemingly unable to move beyond its misogyny. While Dalila might have Milton’s sympathy, since both are people whose religious principles led them to traitorous behavior, he is not about to exonerate her completely, nor even let her remain in his narrative without also inserting strong invectives against her through the mouths of his other characters. It is against this unforgiving portrait of Dalila that Lucy Hutchinson’s version appears quite radical for its time. Hutchinson does what Milton would not, creatively revising the Samson narrative in a way that more formally exculpates her wrongdoing.

While Hutchinson does not attempt to remove from Dalila her notoriety as a deceiver, she does redeem her by turning an inherent fault—a feminine inclination toward deception—into an extreme but necessary measure taken to save her husband. In her retelling, Colonel Hutchinson is, in fact, too manly, and would sacrifice himself were it not for her wiles, that is, the letter she claims to forge in his name, which saves him from appearing before the House. She thus makes feminine trickery a necessary counterbalance to the extreme masculinity of her husband, almost as if her husband’s manliness forced her to commit such a drastic act. If anything, she seems to suggest, her husband’s rash behavior, his desire to make himself into a public spectacle, requires

that she, in turn, deceive him through her epistolary scheming. Using a real-life role reversal—the Colonel finding himself retired to the private life of the countryside, while his wife enters the public sphere via letter in an attempt to save him—Lucy Hutchinson is able to rewrite the Samson story in such a way that Dalila emerges the narrative’s fallen heroine, an identity that she happened upon by accident, but which she intentionally exploits when writing the *Memoirs*. If Milton’s Dalila is shown in a potentially seductive act of supplication, attempting to reunite and “touch” the “hand” of Samson, who violently resists her, then Hutchinson’s Dalila is a widow whose solitude forecloses the possibility of that reunion, while simultaneously authorizing her to tell his story (*SA*, 951-53). Unlike the supplicating hand of Milton’s Dalila, then, Hutchinson’s is the “unskillful hand” that “will injure [the Colonel]” by writing and rewriting his narrative (*Memoirs*, 18).

This is not to say that Lucy Hutchinson is an apologist for all of womankind; in fact, far from it. When discussing the royalist court, she follows Lady Davies in linking the king’s woes to his uxoriousness, having doted too much on his foreign wife. Of interest here, however, is the fact that Hutchinson specifically avoids the Samson imagery she so liberally uses in other parts of the narrative. Whereas Lady Davies goes to great lengths to prove the allegorical link between Charles/Henrietta and Samson/Dalila, Hutchinson, who elsewhere refers to Samson by name and often by metonym through reference to his hair, conspicuously avoids such imagery when discussing how the “power [the queen’s] haughty spirit kept over her husband, who was enslaved in his affection only to her, though she had no more passion for him than what served to promote her designs” (70). Though she describes Charles as “enslaved in his affection,” Hutchinson resists labeling the dynamic between them Samsonic because doing so would interfere with her own use of that narrative. Instead, she diverts attention away from the would-be Samsonic

element of the Carolinean court by comparing it to the Elizabethan court. “If any one object the fresh example of Queen Elizabeth,” she writes, “let them remember that the felicity of her reign was the effect of her submission to her masculine and wise counselors; but wherever male princes are so effeminate as to suffer women of foreign birth and different religions to intermeddle with the affairs of state, it is always found to produce sad desolations; and it hath been observed that a French queen never brought any happiness to England” (70).

By no means mounting a universal defense of women, then, even going so far as to claim Queen Elizabeth’s success was the result of “her submission to her masculine and wise counselors,” Hutchinson still finds a way to resist the negative portrayal of the seventeenth century’s most despised woman, turning a moment of betrayal into one of necessary deception. If not for the fact that “his wife persuaded him, [he] had offered himself a voluntary sacrifice,” according to Hutchinson, whose characterization of her own virtuous actions concerning the letter-writing incident, while still turning her into a Dalila figure, nevertheless, offers a stark contrast to her disparaging of Queen Henrietta, who comes to function as a scapegoat for Hutchinson’s own emasculating activities. Hutchinson thus claims Dalila for the republican side, just as Milton had redeemed Samson from the king’s usage of him in *Eikon Basilike*. Ironically, though, Hutchinson reclaims Dalila *from* Milton, whose negative depiction might otherwise have remained the standard reading of Puritan republicans in seventeenth-century England.

This process of reclaiming Hutchinson continues throughout the *Elegies*, appended to the manuscript version of the *Memoirs*, though her narrative strategy shifts slightly to fit the new genre. Whereas the *Memoirs* attempt some level of facticity in its presentation of events surrounding her betrayal, the elegies, mourning the loss of her husband, introduce a degree of emotion and self-criticism not seen in the biography, and it is these poems I now wish to

consider. Critically speaking, not much has been said about the *Elegies*, with the exception of Pamela Hammons's account, previously discussed. In addition to Hammons, Elizabeth Scott-Baumann writes that "Lucy Hutchinson's self-reproach for the impact of her intervention on her husband pervades the elegies, th[r]ough the language of guilt and infidelity" (456). Focusing on this pervasive tendency for self-reproach, I understand the "language of guilt and infidelity" as a continuation of a project begun in the *Memoirs*, which both establishes her as a Dalila figure, while also serving as a pretext for her need to write. Of utmost importance, then, is Derek Hirst's claim that "If the misrepresentation Lucy Hutchinson perpetrated in the *Memoirs* seems a deliberate effort to remodel the Colonel for posterity, the claim in the *Elegies* that her pride had killed him complicates such an assumption" (271). Here, Hirst has in mind a passage in the second elegy, which reads

if I on thee a private glance reflect  
 confusion does my shamefull eyes deject  
 Seeing y<sup>e</sup> man I Love by me betrayd,  
 by me who for his mutual help was made.  
 Who to preserve thy life ought to haue dyed,  
 & I haue killd' thee by my foolish pride. (33-38)

According to Hirst, we can "resolve the tensions" of this passage "in one of two ways" (271). Either the passage functions as an extension of the fantasy life created by Hutchinson in the *Memoirs*, or else this elegy acts as a tacit admission of her own guilt in attempting to shift her husband's image in that biography. Her "pride" either refers to the act of writing the recantation letter, or, alternatively, to her pretending to write the letter, so as to cover up the fact that her husband had authored it. Hirst seems more inclined to believe the second of these scenarios,

asking whether her characterization is not actually part of a “complex of emotions that included guilt born of concealment and untruth, and real resentments” for her husband’s cowardly behavior, which she attempted to cover up by taking credit for the letter (271). Hirst bases his belief on the idea that the elegies are “surely in an important sense more private” than the memoir, and, for that reason, can be taken as the more truthful or candid version of her feelings (270).

For Hirst, then, elegy 2 offers commentary on the *Memoirs*, but does not continue the fictional narrative found there. Instead, I would suggest that all the elegies function to extend the allegorical project begun in the *Memoirs*, and that her “pride” follows from her attempt to intervene in her husband’s affairs by forging the letter. In some instances, this narrative continuation is explicit, as when she writes in elegy 6, “On the Picture of y<sup>e</sup> Prisoner,” that the Colonel, “like the great Sampson dying Threw downe more / Then he had vanquisht all his life before” (67-68). As elegy 18 asserts, he “liued a Champion,” but “a Victime died,” never achieving the sort of fame that the Samson of *Judges* experiences upon his death (6). Instead of pulling down the pillars of a temple on his enemies, Hutchinson claims that her husband was “Him selfe cheife Pillar of his house,” and that “They all / He [had] taken vp, did vnsupported fall” when he finally perished in prison (11-12). Elsewhere, Hutchinson alludes to the Samson narrative and her own role as Dalila in a more subtle way, for instance, her use of the phrase “foolish pride” in the passage Hirst discusses. If her “foolish pride” “killd” her husband, if she feels as though she “betrayd” her “Love,” it is because the Lucy Hutchinson of the *Elegies* still views herself as a sympathetic Dalila figure, who forged a letter on behalf of her husband in order to save him from decapitation. As much is evident from elegy 9, which describes how

His Thick bright hare flowed in loose Curle

And each lock bound a Captiue Girle

But he markt not Those Victories

Who onely Sought & kept one prize

Whome while he stroue to catch he found

That he himselfe his one Armes bound

And a maids chane tyde him vp then

From giuen liberty to men[.] (33-40)

Unlike the women whom he “bound” with his “Thick bright hare,” only John Hutchinson’s wife “bound” him with her “maids chane,” thus depriving him of the “giuen liberty to men.” This passage could be read as commenting on marriage in general, and the “giuen liberty” the freedom of the bachelor to roam. Yet, given the many other references to the Samson narrative, the passage allows for another reading, as well, wherein the tying of the “maids chane” occurs after matrimony, and the freedom lost is the freedom to pursue the “one prize” of a martyr’s death. In other words, Hutchinson conflates in the space of one stanza two separate events: the loss of a bachelor’s liberty following their marriage, as well as the liberty John Hutchinson lost after his wife betrayed him. While she never identifies herself as Dalila here, the reference to the Colonel’s “Thick bright hare,” as well as her mentioning the ability to divest him of his “liberty,” suggests the Samson myth is never far from her thoughts. From there, Hutchinson goes on to describe how “his mind” continued to shine even through this “passions veyle” (41). The self-described “prize” of her husband, Hutchinson portrays herself as better than all the other women enamored of the Colonel, and more powerful than them, too.

### Conclusion

With that in mind, we must also reconsider the solitude found in the *Elegies*. While Hutchinson would have us believe her solitude belongs to that of a forlorn widow, and certainly there is some truth to that statement, it becomes increasingly clear that this solitude is also what allows her the space to write and rewrite her life with John Hutchinson. Not only does her status as solitary widow give her the chance to write about the events of her and her husband's life, it also acts as the pretext for her embellishing those events. If she served as his mirror while he was alive, "reflect[ing] his glories upon him," then it only makes sense that upon his death that mirror would malfunction, becoming a "pale Empty shade" that casts an allegorical shadow that distorts her husband's image into one that just so happens to fit her own narrative agenda. Which is to say, the mirror metaphor only works so long as John Hutchinson is alive to fill it. Its ability to reflect his life accurately depends on his living presence, which both supplies the image and the light. His death brings emptiness, indeed, but a promising emptiness that allows Hutchinson the freedom to replace the image that previously appeared on that mirror with a new, allegorically-laden one. What initially looks like a modesty topos—the idea that her husband's virtues "will, through my apprehension and expression, shine as under a very thick cloud, which will obscure much of their luster"—now becomes a subtle justification for her narrative reworking. John Hutchinson's deeds "shine as under a very thick cloud" because that is how Lucy Hutchinson wrote them, using the metaphor of a defective and darkened mirror to reconcile why her husband appears as an ineffectual Samson figure, whose Dalilean wife must betray him in order to spare his life. Because she "was nothing before his inspection gave her a fair figure," which, "when he was removed, was only filled with a dark mist," she can now fashion his life out of that same "dark mist," a mystical mist, a mist from which arises her allegorical doubles (51).

Whereas Hutchinson uses her widow's solitude as pretense for her writing, excusing the supposedly poor quality of her writing by reminding readers of her "dejected and inferior spirit," other seventeenth-century women writers more openly link solitude and writing, claiming the former as prerequisite for the latter. First among them is Margaret Cavendish. Cavendish uncompromisingly asserts her right to solitude, since, as she says, it serves as the precondition for imaginative thinking. Nor is Cavendish willing to settle for the solitude afforded an anchorite, since the solitary minds of women "must be as free from all bond, as their mindes must be from all wandering desires," the bonds to which she refers including not just religion, but also "Parents or wedlock," as well as "Superiours" (27). Hutchinson seems to share Cavendish's distaste for anchorites, arguing in *Order and Disorder* that, while Adam's originary solitude was "not his will" and those "Opposing his creator's end, as they / Who into caves and deserts run away" should be condemned (3.320-322). But Hutchinson also disagrees with Cavendish's more liberal philosophy regarding female solitude, arguing elsewhere in *Order and Disorder* that "privacie" contributed to Eve's downfall, claiming "th' assault had not been made / Had she not from her firm protection stray'd" (4.171-174). Against Cavendish's more unabashed assertion of solitude, then, I argue that Hutchinson's solitude is more subdued but also more tactful by comparison. Her Puritan status would seem to restrict her worldly movements, all but eliminating her chances as an aspiring writer, and in many ways this is in fact the case, as even a cursory reading of the many submissive remarks in the *Memoirs* will reveal. Yet, Hutchinson proves herself highly attuned to the conventions not only of allegory, but also elegy, turning her sorrow into a systematic rewriting of her life with John Hutchinson, one that renders him the anti-hero of a story in which she appears a calculating but effective political participant. That these qualities are subsumed within a modesty topos that positions her the despondent and

incapable writer of her dead husband's life thus seems fitting; that this image of her persists in the criticism attests to how effective she was at concealing her own intentions under the guise of a submissive and solitary wife.

Finally, while Hutchinson is not the Dalila found in *Samson Agonistes*, she shares with Milton an interest in allegory that places her in the shadows of her own works. Both authors, too, provide real-life correlatives for their own obscurantism, in the case of Milton, his blindness, and for Hutchinson, her widowhood. Like Milton, who frequently mentions his blindness throughout his poems, Hutchinson similarly claims, following the death of her husband, "My substance into y<sup>e</sup> darke vault was laide / And now I am my owne pale Empty Shade" (first elegy, 7-8). Yet, their mutual affinity for allegory's shadow goes beyond the transformative force of life events, albeit events of chance, uniting them through a literary tradition to which Milton calls attention in *Ad Patrem* when describing "what my dreams have brought to me from the caves / of sleep, and what the laurel groves of the sacred wood / in the shade of Mount Parnassus have seen fit to bestow" (15-16). Alluding to his Greek and Roman models, Milton's many references to shadow and shade place him in the dark alongside such figures as Homer and Virgil, as well as his Christian God, who in *Paradise Lost* is described as "Throned inaccessible, but when thou shad'st / The full blaze of thy beams" (3.377-378). By also placing herself in that darkness, using the pretense of mourning in order to do so, Hutchinson joins her male Miltonic counterparts, both real and fictionalized, who occupy the shadows, entirely alone, except for the muses.

### Notes to Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Citations of Milton's poetry can be found in the Longman editions of Fowler and Carey. All references to Milton's prose sourced from the Yale *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, unless otherwise noted. I give volume first, followed by page number.

<sup>2</sup> See especially R.V. Young's "Milton and Solitude." In his article, Young argues that by the time Milton writes *Paradise Lost* "solitude has become the essential condition of man and devil," adding that Milton understands his own "situation" as one of a "survivor living in a kind of internal exile among the triumphant partisans of what he regarded as a licentious, idolatrous culture" (98; 104). Young's article is especially helpful as an index of the various kinds of solitude found in Milton's texts, but its brevity prevents the author from engaging Miltonic solitude with due diligence.

<sup>3</sup> See also Joan Bennett's *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems*. Speaking of Milton's antinomianism, she similarly observes that, "Released from all positive laws, the Christian must build his or her moral judgment, inner authority, through the discernment of the valid hierarchy of natural laws that apply in particular ethical situations. The more difficult the situation, the more effective the exercise gained. For this reason, Milton gives us the dynamic, challenging moral situations of Satan, Eve, and Adam; the Chorus, Dalila, and Samson; and the Christ of *Paradise Regained*" (108).

<sup>4</sup> See especially John D. Schaeffer, 89-90, and David Ainsworth, 79. Schaeffer significantly downplays the role of dissension and dispute. He compares Milton's understanding of truth to Jeremy Taylor's understanding of the Eucharist, asserting that "To find the common ground of a shared truth is what Taylor thinks is the purpose of the Eucharist, and it is what Milton thinks is the purpose of unlicensed printing: to unite Christians into one body." Reading becomes eating in Schaeffer's account, as the dismembered body of truth is redistributed among Milton's readers-turned-communicants. "Milton conceptualizes a potential unity, a future consensus," concludes Schaeffer, "in the face of the religious and political dissension all around him." David Ainsworth, meanwhile, revises Schaeffer's account in important ways that reintroduces contrariety into the phrase "trials is by what is contrary." Whereas Schaeffer rejects the possibility of "consensus emerging from dispute," Ainsworth argues that truth surfaces in precisely this way, as a "coming together of many individual faiths, communicating, debating in a charitable way, and developing consensus." In his view, however, truth is recovered, not created, and so disputation should be kept to an absolute minimum, the very least needed to perform the act of recovery.

<sup>5</sup> See also Victoria Kahn, 222. Her comparison between Thomas Hobbes and Milton finds that "Hobbes's eloquence was almost always in the service of absolute obedience," while "Milton's imaginative energies were far more often engaged by breach of contract and dissent."

<sup>6</sup> See also *Paradise Lost*, 11.42-44, where the Son requests from the Father that "All my redeemed may dwell in joy and bliss, / Made one with me as I with thee am one," itself a poeticized version of John 17:11, 21-23. However, Milton explains in *Christian Doctrine* that, regarding the Son, just because "the Father dwells in him [...] does not mean that their essence is one, only that their communion is extremely close" (YP 6, 220).

<sup>7</sup> For an insightful discussion of the connection between Eve's logic and Milton's *Areopagitica*, see Diane McColley, *Milton's Eve*, especially pages 172-181.

<sup>8</sup> On this score, see especially Karen Edwards, *Milton and the Natural World*. Edward's intervention occurs within a critical trend that erroneously views Milton as scientifically

unsophisticated. Against this view Edwards claims that Milton “is on *this* side of modernity,” meaning that the poet was not only aware of the scientific empiricism of figures like Boyle, Brown, and Bacon, he also actively and interestingly incorporated the new science within his poetry (3). Edwards begins her discussion by noting an etymological distinction, just beginning to take shape in the mid-seventeenth century, between the terms “experience” and “experiment.” While *experiment* would come to signify that which the new scientists did, namely testing evidence and drawing conclusions inductively, *experience* was associated with an idiosyncratic happening or event, much as it is today. Edwards then uses this distinction to reread the scene of the Fall in Book 9. According to her, Eve’s fall occurs because she relies on experience (and not even her own, but that of the serpent’s) when choosing to eat of the forbidden fruit. “[H]ad she ‘made experiment’ of the serpent’s claims,” writes Edwards, “she would not only have avoided the Fall; she would have discovered in the created world further evidence of the Creator’s glory, power, and wisdom” (39). In general, Edwards claims that Milton consistently identifies Satan and his minions with the old science, based on lore, while in prelapsarian paradise the new science prevails. I complicate Edwards’ analysis by focusing on another word closely linked with scientific empiricism—namely, “trial”—a word that, for Milton, means something quite different than it does for his seventeenth-century scientific counterparts.

<sup>9</sup> See also Elizabeth Mazzola and Corinne S. Abate’s introduction to the critical anthology *Privacy, Domesticity and Women in Early Modern England*. They make the claim that “Only rarely was privacy understood or possible as a state of solitude, and in these infrequent cases it was typically condemned as something dangerous” (5). Discussing the link between privacy and secrecy, Mary E. Trull similarly notes how “this early modern sense of ‘privacy’ indicates the shared freedom of familiarity rather than the freedom of isolation” (8). The semantic divide these scholars claim to identify between privacy and solitude ceases to exist by the middle of the seventeenth century, a time when plays like Walter Montagu’s *The Shepherds’ Paradise* (1632) begin to use the words interchangeably to indicate both the place and experience of aloneness.

## Notes to Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> Robert Burton advances a similarly Aristotelian notion of solitude in *Anatomy of Melancholy*, the most extensive and widely read examination of loneliness in the seventeenth century. While most “voluntary solitude” results in paroxysms of the soul, Burton admits that he “may not deny that there is some . . . kinde of solitariness to be embraced” and that this version of solitude can make “a Paradise, an *Heaven on earth*, if it be used aright” (243-244, my italics). He goes on to cite Plato, who describes in *de Amore* how a solitary Socrates spent an entire day standing in meditation, which would be “pernitious to an other man,” then concludes with his own rendition of the Aristotelian injunction: “man alone is either a Saint or a Divell” (245). See also Francis Bacon’s essay, “Of Friendship,” where he writes that “Savage” is the “man,” who maintains an arbitrary “aversation towards society,” but noble is the mortal, who leaves society “out of a love and desire to sequester a man's self for a *higher conversation*,” as well as George Mackenzie’s essay “Preferring Solitude,” which likewise includes a reference to Aristotle’s beast/god formulation (183).

<sup>2</sup> Excluding Luxon, Harrison, and Long, not many other scholars have devoted prolonged attention to Adam’s solitude, except to mention it in passing, and those who mention it at all often do so in somewhat disparaging terms. Of those scholars, Mary Nyquist designates Adam’s

solitude a “psychological defect inherent in his being the first and only man” (118). Victoria Kahn, too, suggests Adam manifests a real “sense of lack,” while naming his subsequent enamoring of Eve an instance of “voluntary servitude” to his own likeness (211). Wendy Olmsted, who agrees that positive figurations of solitariness exist elsewhere in Milton’s writing, nevertheless claims that he “does not entertain” solitude as a viable alternative to companionate marriage in the epic (181). Mary Beth Long similarly argues that Eve “is the solution to [Adam’s] problem of loneliness,” claiming that Adam’s solitude is a “purely negative, involuntary state” (103, 104).

<sup>3</sup> See especially Mary Nyquist’s “The Genesis of Gendered Subjectivity in Divorce Tracts and in *Paradise Lost*,” which argues for a latent misogyny in Milton’s choice of the “J” or “Jahwist” text. For a more optimistic reading of Milton’s understanding of women, and of divorce in particular, see Catherine Gimelli Martin’s “Dalila, misogyny, and Milton’s Christian liberty of divorce.” Martin argues that “[a]lthough like virtually everyone else in his era, Milton grounds his doctrine in the conventional Pauline teaching of ‘natural’ masculine priority, his critics have also generally overlooked his striking modifications of this teaching” (60). According to her, Milton ostensibly “overturns the conventional system in which intrinsically inferior women are innately subject to men” by making them “negotiating partners” (60).

<sup>4</sup> See also William Poole’s chapter on Adam and Eve’s creation and education, especially pages 171-173.

<sup>5</sup> See also Ronald Levao, “‘Among Unequals What Society’: *Paradise Lost* and the Forms of Intimacy,” especially 90, where he argues that “Twoness never merely replicates oneness, and the play of likeness and difference can be unpredictable, the divergence frustrating pure understanding at one moment and grounding another kind of likeness the next.”

<sup>6</sup> My reading of solitude in Books 8 and 9 thus contributes to a strand of scholarship that includes notable thinkers such as Thomas Luxon, whose work, in particular, offers an important alternative to my own. “Aristotle, when he comes to write his discourse on friendship,” Luxon says, “will take his cue from Aristophanes and develop a whole theory of friendship based on likeness. Milton will come to regard much the same principle as fundamental to creation and metaphysics, as well as friendship” (16). In Luxon’s reading, Milton attempts to apply this model of friendship-based-on-likeness to seventeenth-century marriage, but with little success, since he refuses to grant “equality and thus full humanity to women” (120). In the end, he asserts, Adam remains alone, unable to find an equal in Eve. See also Luxon’s more recent piece, “How Life Began,” which appears in the anthology *Sex Before Sex*, edited by James M. Bromley and Will Stockton. There, Luxon acknowledges the importance of difference in Milton’s ontogeny, though he still subordinates that difference to likeness, writing that “When Adam first expresses desire for a mate, the difference on which he focuses, the difference that gives rise to his desire, is of a kind far less remarkable than sexual difference—it is numerical difference. What is more, it appears to be a numerical difference grounded in the likeness of one individual to another” (267).

<sup>7</sup> See also Joan Bennett, who likewise insists that “Adam’s axiomatic reasoning shows his quicker logical ability, closer to that of the angels” (111).

<sup>8</sup> See also Linda Gregerson, who argues that Eve must “be trained to construe likeness as a hierarchical principle” (160).

<sup>9</sup> In addition to Luxon and Harrison’s takes on Adam’s formation, see also Jonathan Sawday’s piece in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*. Like Luxon, Sawday

also encourages us to read Adam as awaking “fully embodied,” a person who must then attend to “the more pressing problem of the relationship between the body and the self” (46).

<sup>10</sup> Luxon describes this moment using Lacanian terminology as the moment God “by a discursive process becomes sufficiently alien to be recognized (and misrecognized) as an other” (115).

<sup>11</sup> See also Bruce Boehrer’s understanding of Miltonic divorce in “Animal Love in Milton: The Case of ‘Epitaphium Damonis.’” Reading the epitaph as Milton’s earliest attempt to introduce same-sex terminology into a discourse of companionate marriage, Boehrer claims the shepherd Thyrsis, speaker of the elegy, contrasts his human longing for an ideal partner (in this case, a male friend) with the natural converse of animals. Like the divorce tracts that succeed it, the poem’s beastly world provides Milton “a model not of mere sensual gratification but rather of harmonious union, a union to be improved upon by the rational society of human wedlock, but one which nonetheless prefigures the rational ends of wedlock through its own transcendence of carnal promiscuity” (798). By the time of the divorce tracts, Boehrer continues, the animal world will even more prominently represent both a “marker of difference, by employing it as the ground against which the rational and spiritual qualities of human fellowship differentiate themselves” and “a paradigm of contentment and harmonious integration with the surrounding order of things” (805). I

<sup>12</sup> All references to Erasmus’s colloquies appear in Volume 39 of his *Collected Works*, translated by Craig R. Thompson.

<sup>13</sup> Despite my obvious indebtedness to Bennett here and elsewhere, I find her emphasis on knowledge-gaining as a process of phronesis, that is, a collective activity that intends to “keep the dialogue open” and “unit[e] the reasoners,” too quickly overrides Milton’s own interest in trial as a solitary activity (114). The very fact that Adam and Eve’s debate concerns solitude, not God or some other doctrinal quibble, the examples that Bennett uses when discussing the use of phronesis as an humanistic antinomian activity in Milton’s work, suggests more is at stake the collective bargaining tactics implied by her definition.

<sup>14</sup> See also Robert E. Bourdette, Jr., who similarly remarks in “‘To Milton Lending Sense’: Richard Bentley and *Paradise Lost*.” There, Bourdette writes the optimism of Bentley’s sermon “requires [his] explicit emphasis in the final lines of *Paradise Lost* and man’s naturally *social* state” (46).

## Notes to Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> Originally, *Philosophical Rudiments* had been written in Latin under the title *De Cive*, wherein Hobbes states, “Verum quidem esse homini per naturam, sive quatenus est homo, id est, statim atque est natus, solitudinem perpetuam molestam esse.” In the Edmund Waller entry of *Brief Lives*, John Aubrey insists Hobbes translated the first English edition of *De Cive* himself, expressing the Latin “molestam” as “enemy.” While most recent editions of *De Cive* still cite Hobbes as translator, and thus retain the English wording of the original, some scholars, such as Noel Malcolm, convincingly argue that Charles Cotton translated the first edition. No matter who actually translated *De Cive*, however, the fact remains that Hobbes would have been aware of this particular translation, which, all faults aside, is consistent with how Hobbes elsewhere describes solitude, namely, using disparaging terms such as “enemy.” For more on this debate, see Noel Malcolm, “Charles Cotton, Translator of ‘De cive.’” Except for references to *De Cive* and *De Homine*, which are sourced from *Man and Citizen*, edited by Bernard Gert, all other

citations can be found in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*. I indicate volume first, then page number.

<sup>2</sup> I later contrast Fish's rather optimistic view of Hobbes, which certainly has its merits, with Victoria Kahn's more realistic view that Hobbes's philosophical endeavors go beyond merely trying to save his country, enacting a gendered program that forces readers into a subordinate and feminized position.

<sup>3</sup> Zagorin argues that "his definition of the natural law as theorems of reason in contrast to the definition of law as a command [...] brings Hobbes's legal positivism clearly into view as a new development in legal and political philosophy" (49-50).

<sup>4</sup> As Zagorin suggests, "Hobbes called natural law eternal and immutable, which means that it must antedate Scripture and the incarnation of Christ," going on to say that Hobbes "based his argument on reason, although he also sought analogies and support for his conclusions in the Bible, because he was addressing Christian readers" (51).

<sup>5</sup> I read Hobbes's phrase "without care of anything" as an indictment of sloth. Like Reformation theology of the early modern period, which assumes idle hands are the devil's workshop, Hobbes's own philosophy posits action as the natural end of a rationally self-interested individual. A person "without care of anything," who does not contemplate action, but instead themselves, cannot, by Hobbes's account, be acting rationally.

<sup>6</sup> Both Rossello and I share an affinity for the work of Erica Fudge, who argues for a pre-Cartesian understanding of animality that does not render it, *a priori*, the categorical antithesis to human. "If rationality has a relative status" in the early modern period, writes Erica Fudge, "opposed always to irrationality," then "it would be impossible to make a judgment about the possession of reason without invoking the potential for its lack," namely, the animal (36). The same is true of Hobbes's political philosophy, a fact Rossello compellingly demonstrates in his essay.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Burton notes this paradox too, writing that "too much solitarinesse [...] [is] Cause and Symptome both" of melancholy (115). Much of Hobbes's description of the imagination's malfunctioning can also be found in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, a seminal work in early modern psychiatry.

<sup>8</sup> Hobbes himself claims hell only exists metaphorically, writing "that which is thus said concerning hell fire is spoken metaphorically" and intended to "design metaphorically a grief and discontent of mind" (3: 448). McClure calls Hobbes's treatment of hell, in which he vacillates between calling it a metaphor and a real place, an "intentional ambiguity" (6) intended to deter readers from asking "questions about the afterlife" (27). McClure claims such questions will "recede into the background in a more or less unconscious effort to avoid asking them altogether" once readers realize Hobbes himself seems unable to answer them (27). I agree with McClure that Hobbes manufactures anxiety concerning hell, though it is unclear why Hobbes's readers would shy away from questions of the afterlife simply because of Hobbes's ambiguity.

<sup>9</sup> For a very different reading of Milton's hell, see Anthony Low's *Aspects of Subjectivity*. Low argues that Milton's hell constitutes "an exaggerated picture of the Hobbesian state, exhibiting the perfectly disciplined unity of perfectly self-centered individuals" (178). As such, Low reads Milton's hell as analogous to the Hobbesian state *after* the sovereign has been installed, whereas I see his version of hell as closer to Hobbes's state of nature, given the lack of a clear authority, the infighting of the angels, and the bold resolution to wage war. See also John Rogers, who claims that "the chaotic life of man in the Hobbesian state of nature is redeemed through the

direct and ongoing intervention of a powerful sovereign, [whereas] the Miltonic chaos is transformed by Creation into an autonomous universe through a single, nonrepeatable act of divine infusion" (132). See also Barbara Lewalski, who insists that "for Milton, in contrast to Hobbes and the Levellers, repudiation of the political contract does not abrogate the social contract and return men to the state of nature," but it seems that this same statement does not apply when the law in violation is divine rather than overtly political (233).

<sup>10</sup> Adam tells Eve that "Evil into the mind of god or man / May come and go, so unapproved, and leave / No spot or blame behind" (5.117-119).

<sup>11</sup> Nor does Satan recognize his own deformation. He struggles to understand how he has changed, declaring to his fallen comrades, "We know no time when we were not as now" (5.859). Similarly, Satan scorns Zephon, who does not initially recognize him. Upon learning of Satan's identity, Zephon instructs him to "Think not [...] thy shape the same" as it was prior to the fall (4.835). This same inability to comprehend his own difference occurs again when Satan confronts Sin.

<sup>12</sup> Jessica Beckman remarks that Satan has a conscience but cannot adequately respond to it, demonstrating the limits of the conscience as a force of persuasion. As she points out, the success of Adam and Eve's repentance depends on "the social work of shared conscience and faith" (59). For them, as for all fallen individuals in Milton's poetry, conscience is a communal project involving the affective capacity to feel like and for another, whereas Satan's solitude prevents him from escaping his own "sinful self-generated internal torment" (59). However, Beckman never fully elaborates on what this "social work of shared conscience" entails, except to say that it involves commiseration. Responding to her claim, I would qualify it by saying that commiseration is not conformation, whether on earth or in heaven.

### Notes to Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of medieval and Renaissance accounts negatively linking Eve with idleness and feminine vanity, see Diane McColley, *Milton's Eve*, especially 151.

<sup>2</sup> In 1958, B.A Wright counted use of the word "shade" no fewer than sixty times in Milton's poetry, often to mean an outdoor "screen or shelter or retreat," but without making the direct connection to *otium* (205). Except for a few passing references, I have found very little secondary literature examining the connection between *otium* and shade in Milton's work.

<sup>3</sup> See also Shannon Miller, who similarly observes that "The poem will even establish frequent links between Eve's tendency toward being solitary and Satan's frequent description as 'alone,'" adding that the "language in Eve's dream links her to solitariness as well" (35-36).

<sup>4</sup> This accords with McColley's reading of the dream in "Eve's Dream," in which "Milton shows distinctions between the abuses of poetry and its right uses often debated in the Renaissance" (39). See also John M. Steadman, who writes that "Phantasy's proper role, as Milton conceived it, is the production of shapes and images, to be submitted to the reason; but as a mimetic power, usurping the role of reason, it does not produce a reliable image of 'external things'; instead it fabricates out of dispersed memories grotesque and mismatched forms" (59).

<sup>5</sup> For an account of some scholars who impute sinfulness to Eve's dream, see Diana Treviño Benet's "Milton's Toad, or Satan's dream." Benet herself argues for a spotless Eve, whose dream Milton adopts and revises from contemporary authors Crashaw and Crowley, removing from his version the idea that Satan-infected animal spirits predetermine a person's actions (48).

Jeanie Grant Moore also defends Eve through an intertextual comparison with the Lady of *Comus*, whose innocence Milton “recreates” in Eve of *Paradise Lost* (10). Meanwhile, other scholars sense debasement in Milton’s depiction of Eve following her dream. Drawing on classical allusion in the morning after Eve’s unsettling dream, Maggie Kilgour notes a striking resemblance between Eve and the degraded Flora of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, suggesting that perhaps Eve’s fall has already occurred, at least in a prefigurative sense (6).

<sup>6</sup> Ever the poet, Milton depicts *otium* and *umbra* positively, in contrast to Andrew Marvell, whose fulsome praise of *otium* in “The Garden,” Vickers points out, “is anything but admirable, and stands in sharp contrast to Marvell’s thirty years of public service, as Latin Secretary, MP for Hull, representative of the Trinity House and confidential agent for two administrations” (3).

<sup>7</sup> See also Janette Dillon, *Shakespeare and the Solitary Man*. In the introduction, Dillon makes the similar claim that “Petrarch revolutionized the terminology of the solitude debate, replacing the terminology of right and wrong, morally superior and inferior, more or less pleasing to God [...] with a new terminology of personal will, individual nature, and more and less pleasing to self [...]. Petrarch now secularized that contemplative solitude and offered self-examination not as a means to a higher end, but as an alternative, as an end in itself” (18-19).

<sup>8</sup> For Milton’s Latin verse, I am using David R. Slavitt’s interpretation, which maintains the verse structure of the original.

<sup>9</sup> A similar concern for *kairos* appears throughout Milton’s poems, especially *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. Apropos the former, Laurie Zwicky was one of the first scholars to comment on *kairos* in the poem, writing that Milton “interweaves the theme of *kairos* throughout the poem, mentioning a special kind of time more than twice as often as in *Paradise Lost*, and making it the cornerstone of Christ’s rejections of the temptations. Satan’s constant effort is to get Christ to act before his time or *kairos*, and thus pervert God’s plan (271). She goes on to write that Satan displays “no comprehension of the rightness of a moment; he comprehends only opportuneness” (276). According to Zwicky, the key to the Son’s success is discerning not only an opportune rhetorical moment, but also in recognizing the suitability of that moment for God’s plan, which Satan seems fundamentally unable to do. A.B. Chambers makes a similar observation a few years later, claiming “much of Satan’s argument is a devilish *carpe diem*, an insidious temptation to force the pace of Christian time, to confuse critical opportunities with untimely actions and with temporal means of accomplishing them” (194). For Chambers, Milton intentionally sets the incarnate Christ up as a “confused and potentially culpable man,” which makes the “*kairoi* described by Milton [to] begin to seem strange” (200). In my reading of *Paradise Regained*, the Son, expertly attuned to the operations of *kairos*, acts as a to Eve, whose unawareness of time and place in *Paradise Lost* is implicated in the fall. While the Son represents Milton as he would like to be, Eve might better represent how Milton actually perceived his own *kairotic* sensibilities.

<sup>10</sup> Similarly, John Knott remarks on the “critical tendency to characterize the labor of Adam and Eve as georgic,” claiming it “has served as a way of enhancing its importance, for example, by emphasizing its simplicity and dignity and by showing its continuity with labor in the postlapsarian world and thus suggesting that the arts of civilization have a place in paradise” (74). See also Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution*, wherein he says “there is no denying that Milton’s pastoral Eden has at least some of the elements of georgic—those that are most satisfying, and that define humanity as more dignified than the idle beasts” (318). My argument thus differs significantly from the case made by Joanna Picciotto in *Labors of Innocence in Early*

*Modern England*. Tracing the rise of experimental labor in the seventeenth century, Picciotto suggests that writers of various creeds participated in a new form of knowledge production that looked to innocent Adam as a model. Seeking the hidden material substance “behind fallen appearances,” these experimentalists, Milton included, subverted the active/passive dichotomy by rendering contemplation an active “Adamic delving” (13). I argue that Milton rigorously zones Eden into light and dark places, which correspond to ritual behaviors of thinking and doing, mind and body, pastoral and georgic.

<sup>11</sup> While I agree with Kristin P. McColgan, who writes that Milton uses light and darkness to “foreshadow [...] action or comment upon it, sometimes through irony, sometimes through metaphor and/or symbol,” I would qualify her later claim that “even in the unfallen world” the light/dark imagery “possesses a doubleness, particularly when viewed from a postlapsarian perspective” (90, 94). By my understanding, this doubleness applies *exclusively*—not “particularly,” as she puts it—to our postlapsarian viewpoint, since prelapsarian paradise is anti-allegorical and therefore without the metaphoric dualism to which she refers. For a comprehensive overview of Milton’s use of light and darkness, see Shirley Sharon-Zisser’s “Silence and Darkness in *Paradise Lost*.” Sharon-Zisser argues for a “double-valued” use of darkness/silence, in which “any positive attributed to silence and darkness in any of the spatial realms of the poem entails a negative aspect” (197).

<sup>12</sup> Crane claims critics tend to overemphasize the closet as a site of privacy because it better agrees with privacy’s modern definition. Not only do these critics misconstrue notions of privacy as understood at the time, but they also neglect the implications of outdoor privacy for early modern subjectivity (5). By imagining a subject fashioned, not indoors, but rather within a garden or bower, she claims, we arrive at a more accurate understanding of the early modern person, whose “self is not enclosed, but rather porous, open to the natural world, and openly expressive of its desires” (17).

<sup>13</sup> See also Patricia Parker, who makes a similar observation concerning twilight in Eden, which, according to her, functions “as the temporal figure for the suspended or pivotal threshold of decision” (321).

<sup>14</sup> For more on the recipient, as well as the letter’s occasion, see Stephen Fallon, pages 14-20.

<sup>15</sup> That Adam’s solitude in Book 8 begins not in shade but “In balmy sweat, which with his beams the sun / Soon dried” attests to its aboriginality (8.255-56). It also suggests that, initially, his is a solitude of body, not mind, a fact confirmed through the “quick instinctive motion” by which he jumps to his feet, described in my first chapter as animal-like in nature (259). Only later does Adam begin to contemplate his own solitude as a spiritual lack, at which points he enters shade.

<sup>16</sup> See also Andrew Mattison, especially 18 and 89, where he contends the separation scene to be a problem of place. “Eve describes Eden as being hurried,” he writes, which contrasts with “Adam’s description of ample room and leisurely work within a basically stable and predictable place.” In Mattison’s opinion, the fall results from a failure of description and a “rhetoric that succumbs to the discrepancy between the slowness of persuasion and the immediacy of description.” The urgency with which Eden is described as “tending to wild” runs counter to the slowness with which Adam and Eve are convinced of each other’s arguments. For Mattison, then, the real problem is how place is described, whereas the problem in my reading has to do with the emplacement of Milton’s characters. It is not *what* kind of place they are in that concerns me, but rather where they are geographically within Eden that seems most pertinent.

## Notes to Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> See also John M. Steadman, who similarly asserts that “Milton could effectively exploit the imagery of darkness and blackness in order to hint at divine objects and modes of contemplation too lofty and too luminous for the human intellect” (76).

<sup>2</sup> See also Ryan Netzley’s “How Reading Works: Hermeneutics and Reading Practice in *Paradise Regained*.” Netzley suggests a plausible way out of (or rather into) what he poses as the poem’s strictly hermeneutic problem, arguing “the solution to the double bind that *Paradise Regained* offers, however obliquely, is that reading is not primarily valuable for the interpretations and knowledge that it enables, but rather for the habits that it produces” (6). In particular, he draws attention to the moments during the pinnacle scene in which the very presence of Scripture, having been explicitly cited by both Satan and the Son, proves crucial to a proper reading of the text: “the brief epic refuses to outsource interpretive authority, insisting instead that the practice of reading *Paradise Regained* and of rereading the citations from Luke, Matthew, and Deuteronomy within the poem itself produces the disposition that in turn authorizes and enables such circular hermeneutic activities. Any interpretive authority that exists at this moment is the result of a specific reading activity, not a privileged textual site or source” (7).

<sup>3</sup> The magic to which Quint refers is the magic of the spirit world, whereas I mean the magic infused into mystical Eden. Quint argues that “Milton follows Augustine’s logic in *Paradise Regained* in order to empty the world of nature spirits: that is, to end human belief in their very being” (184). In the end, he writes, “[w]e are cleansed by a new consciousness that nature has never been the home or possession of demons—of any kind” (193).

<sup>4</sup> The “interior sequence” of the Son’s thought, Anderson writes, “leads to an actual place, the ‘Desert wild,’ yet simultaneously triggers and neutralizes the shift in orientation from inside to outside and psychic to physical. The Son’s apparently physical steps are easily read metaphorically as well, however—as steps in meditation rather than only in the flesh. This notable, if unassuming, line thus pointedly connects the Satanic binaries real and allegoric, historical and figurative, mimetic and conceptual, and does so without also making them markedly distinct” (275). See also Brian Hook, “A Kingdom Real or Allegoric: Milton and the Uses of Allegory,” in which he argues that Milton would like to avoid allegoric language altogether when discussing God’s very real kingdom, but understands this as an impossibility given his own accommodating position as poet. “It is Milton’s brilliant solution,” he writes, “[...] that the kingdom of God is both real *and* allegoric” (15). While he “may be concerned by the allegoric in its extremes,” nevertheless Milton realizes that allegory “is the only mode of approaching Jesus’ kingdom and his heroism that is available to those who are temporal, fleshly, and fallen” (15).

<sup>5</sup> That “rousing” implies a storm finds precedent in Michael Drayton’s *Mortimeriados*, where the word describes a similar scene of stormy destruction. I contend that Milton uses the word “rousing” in a similar way, to mean the stormy motions Samson is about to unleash on the Philistines. Like the armies of Drayton’s poem, Samson also “casts” “upon heapes” a number of “bodies,” and he does so, according to the Messenger, “as a bustling tempest’s rousing blasts” (*Mortimeriados*, lines 386-392). In both poems, then, rousing and razing are linked together through stormy conceit.

<sup>6</sup> We also learn from the Messenger that “The vulgar only scaped” Samson’s wrath, “who stood without,” which, if read as political allegory, might refer to figures that Milton himself pardons in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1659). “Milton reaches out” in that tract, writes Barbara Lewalski, to those who despise the king’s rule yet refrain from involving themselves in what had become the theatre of Charles’s trial and subsequent execution (230).

<sup>7</sup> Much earlier than David Lowenstein’s piece of a previous note is George Whiting’s “*Samson Agonistes* and the Geneva Bible,” which, like that of Lowenstein, seeks to place the play within its historical context. Whether more Hellenistic or Hebraic in its scope, Whiting warns that “When Milton’s indebtedness to the Renaissance”—which Whiting views as a return to Hellenistic values—“is exclusively studied and emphasized, his place in the Reformation and his fundamental religious character are disregarded” (21). Thus, Whiting encourages us to read the play alongside the Geneva Bible (likely Milton’s go-to Bible), arguing that “In both the Geneva Bible and *Samson Agonistes* Samson is presented as an individual acting in relation to God and within a scheme of religious values that are recognizably Protestant and Puritan” (23). Whiting thereby recovers the Hebraic element of Milton’s play, which forms the basis for much future criticism that sees Samson’s violent end as in line with seventeenth-century religious practice on the Protestant side of things.

## Notes to Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, Keeble acknowledges the debt John Hutchinson’s life owes to the writing of his wife, suggesting that she often “characterises her as his shadow when his surviving image is hers” (235).

<sup>2</sup> A model for the latter sort of mourning can be found in Catherine Parr’s 1547 *Lamentations of a Sinner*, a strongly anti-Catholic tract that resists auricular confession in favor of a public funeral in the wake of Henry VIII’s passing.

<sup>3</sup> Parts of the *Memoirs* were begun while the Colonel still lived. My concern here are those moments in the text in which Lucy Hutchinson addresses her widowed life after the Colonel’s death, which, it is safe to assume, were not written before 1664.

<sup>4</sup> For uses of anamorphism in Hutchinson’s text, see Jen E. Boyle, who finds anamorphic energy in “Hutchinson’s translation of Lucretius’s figures[,] [which] foregrounds images as a theory of baroque observation. In this sense, we are given a perceptual model that resists a conceptualization of Epicureanism as a precursor to the mechanical worldview of the later Enlightenment” (37).

<sup>5</sup> Unabridged, the quote from *The Reason of Church-Government* reads: “I cannot better liken the state and person of a King then to that mighty Nazarite *Samson*; who being disciplin’d from his birth in the precepts and the practice of Temperance and Sobriety, without the strong drink of injurious and excessive desires, grows up to a noble strength and perfection with those his illustrious and sunny locks the laws waving and curling about his god like shoulders” (*YP* 1, 859).

<sup>6</sup> Many critics could be cited here, so I will limit my survey to some of the more negative epithets I have come across. For a more comprehensive list, see Derek N.C. Wood’s *Exiled from Light*, especially 99-110. Wood himself reacts against the negative portrait of Dalila among critics, claiming it is “fairly easy to make a sympathetic case for Dalila” (99). Samuel Johnson, who elsewhere acknowledges Milton’s misogyny, nevertheless deems Dalila the embodiment of

the “strategems and allurements of feminine hypocrisy” (107). More recent scholars have continued the trend begun by Johnson, with William Riley Parker designating her “a despicable creature who betrays her husband” (243), and, more recently still, Mary Ann Radzinowicz a “hardhearted taunter” (168). Barbara Lewalski describes her as “the Great Whore of Babylon” (1058), while Laura Morrow lists her as a “sensual Machiavel” (40). Achsah Guibbory claims she embodies “the lure of idolatry and monarchy” (195), while Irene Samuel labels her “bird-brained” (248). While positive appraisals of Dalila do exist among Milton critics (in addition to Woods’ reading, see also William Empson’s article, in which he describes her as a “high-minded great lady, wholly committed to the values of ‘the world’”), as this list attests, many still adhere to Milton’s negative portrayal of his female character (255).

<sup>7</sup> “You make many anxious inquiries, even about what I am thinking. Listen, Diodati, but in secret, lest I blush; and let me talk to you grandiloquently for a while. You ask what I am thinking of? So help me God, an immortality of fame. What am I doing? Growing my wings and practising flight. But my Pegasus still raises himself on very tender wings” (463).

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**Education**

Ph.D., English, Indiana University, Bloomington (2015)  
Minor: Gender Studies

M.A., English, Indiana University, Bloomington (2010)  
Minor: Gender Studies

B.A., English, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (2008)  
Minor: Philosophy, History

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**Appointments**

Associate Instructor, Indiana University, (2009-2015)

Blogger for Medieval and Renaissance journal *Exemplaria* (2013-present)

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**Honors, Awards, Recognitions**

*Service-Learning Fellowship*, awarded to six graduate students from all colleges in recognition of commitment to service-learning pedagogy (2014)

Teaching award nomination for outstanding teaching by a fourth-year instructor, Department of English (2013)

Passed Ph.D. qualifying exam with distinction, Department of English (2011)

*The Mary Gaither Prize*, awarded for the best graduate essay in the field of British literature, Department of English (2011)

*Russell Noyes Award in Romantic Studies*, awarded for the best graduate essay in the field of Romanticism, Department of English, (2010)

*Roy W. Battenhouse Fellowship*, a year-long fellowship awarded to top graduate candidate in Shakespeare or Renaissance studies, Department of English (2008)

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**Select Conferences**

“‘Of Things Invisible to Mortal Sight’: *Paradise Lost* and the Question of Filmability,” will present at “Milton and his Postmodern Heirs,” Modern Language Association, Austin (January, 2016)

“Hidden Plots: Sacred Spaces and Satanic Designs in Milton’s Eden,” will present at “Reading Early Modern Conference,” University of Reading, England (July, 2015)

“Between Beast and God: Adam’s Solitude and Human Ontogeny in Book 8 of *Paradise Lost*,” will present at “Between Being(s): Phenomenologies of the Creature in Early Cultures,” University of California, Irvine (April, 2015)

“A Flesh Divided: Solitude and Marriage in *Paradise Lost*,” presented at The Newberry Center for Renaissance Studies Multidisciplinary Graduate Student Conference, Chicago (January, 2015)

“Becoming-bird: An Ornithological Reading of *King Lear*,” presented at “Reading Matters,” University of California, Los Angeles (May, 2014)

“The Prospect of Pain: Sadism and Masochism in *Measure for Measure*,” presented at “The Poetics of Pain,” City University of New York (January, 2010)

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## Teaching

ENG 204, Introduction to Fiction (2014)

An intensive writing (IW) course for non-majors that focuses on the basics of literary analysis in a wide variety of fiction from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries

W240, Service Learning (2014-2015)

A course that combines aspects of composition with volunteer work at local non-profits, teaching students how to write for/to the specific needs of a given community program

W231, Professional Writing (2012-2014)

A business writing class that trains students to write for the non-academic world, including how to write memos, job application materials, and a final recommendation report

W170, Men in Motion: Surfers, Bikers, and Bodybuilders in 1960s America (2012)

A course of my own creation, which examined the intersection of masculinity and motility in a few 1960s subcultures in and around the Venice beach area

W131, Reading, Writing, and Inquiry (2009-2011)

An introductory class in composition, preparing students for college writing through detail-oriented analysis of test objects and an emphasis on unobvious and evidence-supported claims

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## Departmental Service and Guest Lectureships

Graduate Student Coordinator, Department of English (2014)

Organized visits for prospective graduate students and significant others, including lodging, travel to and from the airport, meals, and meetings with professors

Early English Language and Culture Colloquia, Department of English (2012-2014)

Coordinated numerous events in which graduate students presented excerpts from forthcoming research papers, dissertation chapters, or conference papers

English Graduate Conference Moderator, Department of English (2012)

Moderated “Space, Place, and Race” panel at the “Occupied: Taking Up Time and Space” conference held at Indiana University

Guest Lecturer for undergraduate Milton course (2015)

Taught Books 7 and 8 of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*

Guest Lecturer for undergraduate survey course (2011)

Taught Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*

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## Languages

Latin (reading proficiency)

Italian (reading proficiency)

Spanish (reading proficiency)

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