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MILTON
STUDIES

XXIII  Edited by

James D. Simmonds

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH PRESS

MILTON STUDIES

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Within the United States, *Milton Studies* may be ordered from the University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15260.

Overseas orders should be addressed to Feffer and Simons, Inc., 100 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.

*Dedicated to the memory of
Mother M. Christopher Pecheux
(1916-1982)*

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 69-12335

ISBN 0-8229-3558-9

US ISSN 0076-8820

Published by the University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15260

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Feffer & Simons, Inc., London

Manufactured in the United States of America

he is offering some sort of extenuation of Satan when he calls him a "rippingly grand aristocrat" and argues that a "Norman lord in England did not entertain the modern idea of a nation; his obligations of loyalty were often complicated, and his main view of the English throne was that he would only let one of his cousins have it." Fowler (*Poems*, p. 22, note to Book V, line 756) is certainly correct in pointing out that the "analogy would hardly have seemed creditable to M." Baronial autonomy, or aspiration to it, must have seemed to Milton to be close to the heart of human evil.

40. Michael Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdoms of God* (London, 1964), pp. 145-46. Fixler describes Cromwell's (and Milton's) considerations as "based . . . on two distinct grounds," the first being "justification under natural law" and the second, finally conclusive, being "the argument that an immediate, objective, self-evident divine sanction existed" (p. 146). What both reasons amounted to was an assertion of justice as the interest of the stronger, the new rising class; that is the only possible legitimization for human action which transforms history. Cf. Marx, *Capital*, p. 225: "The capitalist maintains his rights as a purchaser when he tries to make the working-day as long as possible. . . . And the labourer maintains his right as a seller when he wishes to reduce the working day to one of definite normal duration. There is here, therefore, an antinomy, right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchanges. Between equal rights force decides. Hence it is that . . . the determination of what is a working-day, presents itself as the result of a struggle, a struggle between collective capital, *i.e.*, the class of capitalists, and collective labour, *i.e.*, the working class." See also Frederick Engels, "On Authority," in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1969), vol. II, pp. 376-79 and Engels, *The Role of Force in History*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1970), vol. III, pp. 377-428.

41. Bruce Coggin, "Sir John Fortescue on Organic Politics," *Modern Age: A Quarterly Review* XXIII (1979), 270, 271.

42. Berry, *Process of Speech*, p. 149.

43. Jacques Maritain, *Distinctions to Unite, or The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (London, 1959), p. 226.

44. Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, p. 337.

45. Summers, *Muse's Method*, pp. 72-73.

46. Hamlet, "Recalcitrance, Damnation, and the Justice of God," *passim*.

47. Marx, *Capital*, 145n.

48. Coggin, "Sir John Fortescue on Organic Politics" p. 270.

49. Malcolm Ross, *Poetry and Dogma: The Transfiguration of Eucharistic Symbols in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry* (New Brunswick, 1954), p. 189.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: A SINUOUS REFLECTION OF MILTON'S EVE¹

King-Kok Cheung

THE MUSE of *Paradise Lost* answers promptly and unambiguously the question of what first caused human disobedience: "Th' infernal Serpent; hee it was, whose guile . . . deceiv'd / The Mother of Mankind."² Although the answer accords well with Genesis, it raises the knotty issue of responsibility by implying that neither God nor human-kind caused the original sin, that it was brought about by the subtle beast inspired by Satan. A literal reading of Genesis, moreover, contradicts the New Testament passage which declares that every person is self-tempted (James i, 13-14) and renders our first parents as unwitting victims. As a fervent believer in human liberty, Milton takes great pains to resolve the contradiction — largely at the expense of our First Mother. Despite the assertion that Eve is deceived, her potential for — if not disposition to — evil is hinted at throughout the epic by her affinities with the serpent. Just as "Adam is tempted by Eve and Eve is part of himself," as Arnold Stein has observed,³ the serpent in *Paradise Lost* is to some extent, I believe, the image of Eve: she is at once deceived and self-deceived. Availing himself of the traditional association between the serpent and Eve, Milton persistently intertwines the two in his poem to convey his idea of human responsibility: the Fall occurs when the Serpent without beckons to a shadowy serpent within, when human desire answers to beastly provocation.⁴

I

The alleged resemblance between Eve and the Eden serpent dates back to the biblical exegesis of the Middle Ages. Henry Ansgar Kelly notes that the tradition of the maiden-faced serpent emerged around 1170, thanks to Peter Comestor, who explicated the story of Genesis as follows:

Because [Lucifer] was afraid of being found out by the man, he approached the woman, who had less foresight and was "wax to be twisted into vice" and this by means of the serpent. . . . He also chose a certain kind of serpent . . . which had the countenance of a virgin, because *like favors like*. (Emphasis added)⁵

The last three words quoted suggest that the serpent chosen by Satan resembles Eve, and that Eve is attracted by the serpent because of the resemblance. It is tempting to apply Comestor's psychological explanation to Milton's Eve, who falls in love with her own countenance as soon as she is created. Furthermore, in the context of *Paradise Lost*, "like favors like" has a sinister significance: with the exceptions of the divine Father and the Son, and of God and Man, dotting on one's image (whether literally as Eve on her reflection or metaphorically as Satan on Sin, and Adam on Eve) invariably presages mischief.⁶

Besides appearing in numerous literary sources, versions of the maiden-headed serpent abound in the visual arts — the most famous being Michelangelo's painting of the temptation on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.⁷ While Milton might not have had access to some of the literary sources, he was certainly familiar with Giambattista Andreini's *L'Adamo* (the oft-mentioned "source" for *Paradise Lost*), in which the Satanic serpent is represented as a woman — serpentine only from the waist down (II.iii).⁸ He was also familiar with the iconographic tradition of the maiden-headed serpent, as suggested by J. B. Trapp and Roland M. Frye. Frye, however, thinks that the poet chooses to ignore this tradition: "he was not an antifeminist and could scarcely have put a 'lady visage' on his Tempter without seeming to some readers to invite an identification of the devil with woman"; but the argument is disputable on two grounds.⁹ First, the devil does not demonize creatures by disguising himself as these creatures. Although Satan at one point disguises himself as a cherub, cherubs are not henceforth diabolical. Second, the womanized serpent was not in itself an expression of antifeminism. Diane McColley, for instance, has noted that the context of Raphael's fresco *Adam and Eve*, wherein the "the Serpent . . . is a shadowed Eve," is the Stanza della Segnatura's "magnificent tribute to divine and humane learning." Yet McColley goes even further than Frye in justifying the ways of Milton to Eve. Milton, McColley insists, works against the iconographic tradition that links Eve and the serpent: his Eve is sensuous without being wanton, whereas Raphael's, "surrounded by monuments to humanity and divinity, seems the wanton portress at the gates of divine mercy and human achievement."¹⁰

Despite the arguments by Frye and McColley to the contrary, I submit that Milton's Eve does have affinities with the serpent. Whether or not the poet is antifeminist, he does not scruple to ferret out a serpentine root to the name of Eve. His etymological awareness of her name is discussed in D. C. Allen's analysis of Adam's vituperative speech to Eve:

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Out of my sight, thou Serpent, that name best
Befits thee with him leagu'd, thyself as false
And hateful; nothing wants, but that thy shape,
Like his, and color Serpentine may show
Thy inward fraud, to warn all Creatures from thee
Henceforth.

(X, 867-72)

Although according to Genesis Eve was so named "because she was the mother of all living" (iii, 20), Allen points out that this correct meaning was not unanimously accepted by Milton's generation, that some mistook a Hebrew form of Eve as meaning serpent. He traces the erroneous interpretation to the *Protrepticus* of Clement of Alexandria, an author well known to Milton: "In the Hebrew, says Clement, if the name of Eve is aspirated it is the same as the feminine of serpent." A similar account is found in Eusebius, another known authority for Milton: "according to the exact Hebrew pronunciation, the name Heva with an aspirate is interpreted as a female serpent." "So when Adam tells his wife that the name of serpent befits her best, neither he nor Milton is talking off the top of the head," Allen concludes. "A little tradition and some bad Hebrew stood behind the remark."¹¹ With the tradition of the maiden-headed serpent still in mind, I suspect that more stands behind that remark than even Allen realizes. While Milton does not explicitly use that tradition, he consciously incorporates parallels between Eve and the serpent. While he does not feminize the Eden serpent, he imbues his Eve with "color Serpentine"; he blurs the line between tempter and tempted to accentuate the woman's moral responsibility and culpability.¹²

II

Both Eve and the serpent in *Paradise Lost* are remarkable for their physical charm and potential danger. Portentous shadows hover over the very first portrait of Eve:

For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace

Shee as a veil down to the slender waist

Her unadorned golden tresses wore

Dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets wav'd

As the Vine curls her tendrils, which impli'd

Subjection, but requir'd with gentle sway,

And by her yielded, by him best receiv'd,

Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,

And sweet reluctant amorous delay.

(IV, 298, 304-11)

As several critics have noted, many words in this passage are discomfiting.¹³ Adjectives such as “wanton” and “amorous” anticipate their postlapsarian use—as when describing the “lustful” daughters of Eve in Book XI: “A Bevy of fair Women, richly gay / In Gems and wanton dress; to the Harp they sung / Soft amorous Ditties” (582–84). Similes also insinuate. The “veil” of hair that hides Eve implies modesty but also suggests guile and disguise, a suggestion reinforced by the use of similes: “as a veil” and “as the vine.” Her hair looks like something it is not;¹⁴ such “seeming” anticipates Adam’s denunciation of the discrepancy between Eve’s outward form and inner substance (X, 872–73).

Even her disarming attributes take on foreboding implications. While “softness” conveys femininity, and “yielded with coy submission” conveys docility, “softness” and the tendency to “yield” are put forward by the author of *The Cave of Treasures* as the actual reasons why the serpent chooses the woman as target; “soft” for that author implies “easily swayed by specious argument” and “yield” implies “being liable to succumb.”¹⁵ Milton’s Eve will likewise be swayed and will succumb to the serpent’s temptation. Her “sweet attractive Grace” also strikes a warning note, for we have heard Sin boast of her “attractive graces” (II, 762). Eve’s “pride,” despite its various positive connotations and despite its “modest” qualification, furnishes yet another caveat, for hitherto pride has been associated solely and persistently with Satan—so persistently that it is called “his wonted pride” (I, 527).

More disconcerting, Milton repeats many of the words and images that describe Eve when portraying the satanic serpent—he that

toward Eve

Address’d his way, not with indented wave,
 Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
 Circular base of rising folds, that tow’r’d
 Fold above fold a surging Maze, his Head
 Crested aloft, and Carbuncle his Eyes;
 With burnisht Neck of verdant Gold, erect
 Amidst his circling Spires, that on the grass
 Floated redundant

his tortuous Train
 Curl’d many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve,
 To lure her Eye.
 (IX, 495–503, 516–18)

Words indicating similar shape and color—“wave / wav’d” and “gold / golden”—inform both passages quoted above.¹⁶ In one we see waves of

“golden tresses” covering Eve’s nape, described again as “the flowing gold of her loose tresses” (IV, 497); in the other we see the serpent’s “burnisht Neck of verdant Gold.” The “wanton ringlets” of Eve, which “wav’d / As the Vine curls her tendrils,” are suggestive of the “circling Spires” of the serpent, of his “tortuous Train” which “Curl’d many a wanton wreath.”¹⁷ As a result of the insistent suggestions, it is difficult to read “ringlets” without thinking about the lascivious “wreaths”; to aggravate matters, the two alliterating words are both modified by “wanton,” surely a provocative adjective. The provocation comes specifically from a certain bewitching disorder common to Eve and the serpent: her flowing, luxuriant hair is “dishevell’d”; the “rising folds” of the serpent, that “roll’d / In tangles” (IX, 631–32), move in a “surging Maze.” Both the hair and the folds are difficult to untangle; both are resplendent, mesmeric. And the sibilants in the two passages are enough to form a “contrapuntal serpent hiss.” The details seem to cause Eve’s “soft” and “slender” body to follow serpentine contours, her sensuousness insinuating sensuality.¹⁸

Associations between Satan/serpent and Eve creep up again and again—in scenes depicting her awakening, her demonic dream, her separation from Adam, her temptation, and her postlapsarian cunning. They become inescapable as the epic unfolds, culminating in the *meeting* of the woman and the serpent.

Warning signals can be detected from the moment Eve awakes into life, an awakening that differs markedly from Adam’s. Waking in direct sunlight, Adam instinctively turns his eye and mind heavenward in the hope of knowing and adoring his creator (VIII, 253–82). By contrast, Eve awakens in the shade—where snakes slumber. She too wonders about her creation, but instead of looking up to the sky, she bends over a pool, seeing the sky only as a shadow and herself as an image:

I thither went
 With unexperienc’t thought, and laid me down
 On the green bank, to look into the clear
 Smooth Lake, that to me seem’d another Sky.
 As I bent down to look, just opposite,
 A Shape within the wat’ry gleam appear’d
 Bending to look on me, I started back,
 It started back, but pleas’d I soon return’d,
 Pleas’d it return’d as soon with answering looks
 Of sympathy and love; there I had fixt
 Mine eyes till now, and pin’d with vain desire.

(IV, 456–66, emphasis added)

D. C. Allen points out the ominous significance of Eve's posture by paraphrasing St. Augustine: "When the angels were created they looked first at themselves, surprised at their own existence. Then some looked upward and found the source of creation in the Word. Others fell in love with themselves and sank in their own darkness."¹⁹ Ominous analogues are found within the epic itself, for we have already been introduced to Mammon, whose "looks and thoughts / Were always downward *Bent*" (I, 680-81, emphasis added), and to Satan, who fell in love with Sin, his "perfect image" (II, 764). So when Eve looks down at her image in the pool, we sense trouble.

We are further troubled by the analogous reactions of Eve and Satan to their respective images. "Starting" to and fro, Eve conveys dread and longing, a response Satan has exemplified with Sin: recoiling from Sin at first, he then becomes "familiar" with his "perfect image" (II, 761, 764). Innocent Eve, to be sure, does not know that she is looking at herself, but her gesture foreshadows her less innocent encounter with the serpent, which I will suggest is yet another "fair image" of her.

Eve's description of her reaction to the watery image stirs up in the reader the first troubling reflections — now of Satan, now of his serpentine incarnation. Other water images are conjured up — those associated with the serpent that moves "not with indented *wave*," but like "a *surg-ing Maze* . . . that on the grass / *Floated* redundant" (IX, 496, 499, 502-03; emphasis added). Both Eve and the serpent are set off against a green background, the former "on the green bank," the latter "on the grass." Just as Eve is enamored of her image, so will she be enchanted by the serpent. Just as she is fooled by appearances at the pool, mistaking the lake for the sky and her reflection for a sympathetic being, she will be fooled by Satan's disguise.

Her very shape and movement appear ophidian. Her sinuous contours contrast sharply with the rugged lineaments of Adam, whom she will find "Less winning soft, less amiably mild" (IV, 479). The words "bent" and "bending" used by Eve to describe herself and her image evoke an arched back with flexible spine — a languid, S-shaped creature. And if we visualize the image in the pool as extending from the figure by pool, we have the configuration of an erect serpent. It wriggles insidiously: "I started back, / It started back, but pleas'd I soon return'd." The back-and-forth movement is both reminiscent of a serpent's spasmodic motions and emblematic of a human reaction upon seeing a serpent: being lithe, graceful, but possibly venomous, a serpent often both fascinates and frightens.

Also fascinating and fearsome is the serpent's steady glance, which

is perhaps hinted at in Eve's wistful fixation on her image. "I had fixt Mine eyes till now" anticipates Satan's "gaze admiring" (IX, 524) and "gaze / Insatiate" (IX, 535-36); Eve hankers after herself much as Satan will hanker after her. She will, moreover, receive "looks / Of sympathy and love" from the serpent, who will tell her that she should be worshipped universally, not just by beasts and Adam, and that she should be seen a "Goddess among Gods" (IX, 547). Finally, her pining "with vain desire" recalls Satan's "fierce desire . . . / Still unfulfill'd with pain of longing pines" (IV, 509, 511), a "vain" desire insofar as Satan can feel "neither joy nor love" (509).

Eve's vain desire is checked for the moment by a divine voice, which warns her against self-love. But we encounter the words "vain" and "desire" again in the dream episode when Satan attempts to raise in Eve "Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires / Blown up with high conceits ingend'ring pride" (IV, 808-09). Since "vain," "desire," and "pride" echo words that have been used earlier to describe Eve, recalling her "modest pride," her "pining with vain desire," the question remains whether these qualities are demonically induced or self-engendered.

Satan's adulation of Eve in the dream similarly reflects her own musings. Just before she retires, she has asked an abrupt question regarding nocturnal beauty: "But wherefore *all* night long shine these, for whom / This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut *all* eyes?" (IV, 657-58, emphasis added). Adam answers by explaining order; Satan, pandering to Eve's curiosity and vanity, answers by perverting order:

Heav'n wakes with *all* his eyes,
Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire,
In whose sight *all* things joy, with ravishment
Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze.

(V, 44-47, emphasis added)

These lines hark back to the scene at the pool. The wakeful heaven brings to mind the lake that has seemed to Eve another sky, and both the watery and the nocturnal skies arouse narcissistic longings in her. More immediately, Satan's repetition of "all" parallels Eve's repetition of the same in her question to Adam just before retiring. The question perhaps conceals a desire for the answer which the voice in her dream supplies: Satan's repetition echoes and compounds the self-love latent in the question. As Arnold Stein observes, the voice in the dream may be construed as Eve's very own — "assumed, projected, and heightened by the tempter who is external, but who cannot effectively tempt except internally" (87). The tempter's voice approximates the dreamer's.

More approximations can be heard, notably during the separation scene. Eve suggests to Adam that by gardening separately they might more efficiently fulfill their responsibilities. Her wish accords well with that of the satanic serpent, who hopes to find "Eve separate . . . when to his wish, / Beyond his hope, *Eve* separate he spies" (IX, 422-24). Adam tries to dissuade Eve from working alone by pointing out that her reason may be misguided by "some fair appearing good" (354). The distinction between fair and good not only looks forward to Satan's disguise as the beautiful serpent but also looks back to Adam's own evaluation of Eve: "in outward show / Elaborate, of inward less exact" (VIII, 538-39). Hence Adam's warning to Eve should also be his self-warning against being dazzled by his fair spouse. The beast and the beauty are enmeshed yet once more.

Furthermore, Eve's argument for separation strongly anticipates the serpent's argument for a perilous venture; both paraphrase and distort *Areopagitica*.²⁰ Eve seeks to prove her worth through personal experience: "What is Faith, Love, Virtue unassay'd / Alone, without exterior help sustain'd?" (IX, 335-36). The serpent urges her to know through personal experience: "if what is evil / Be real, why not known, since easier shunn'd?" (IX, 698-99). Eve disparages untried virtue; the serpent encourages tried virtue.

Eve seems to be in the grip of a desire to leap into the unknown, a desire reinforced by dread. That an attraction can sometimes be made more, not less, irresistible by fear has been suggested in the demonic dream of Eve: when she sees that Satan has eaten the forbidden fruit, "damp horror chill'd" her (V, 65), yet she thinks she "Could not but taste" (86). Similar dual responses of fear and fascination run through the temptation scene, where one finds striking correspondences between Eve and the satanic serpent. He has arrived at the garden:

Spot more delicious than those Gardens feign'd
Or of reviv'd *Adonis*, or renown'd
Alcinoüs, host of old *Laertes*' Son,
Or that, not Mystic, where the Sapient King
Held dalliance with his fair *Egyptian* Spouse.
Much hee the Place admir'd, the Person more.

What pleasing seem'd, for her now pleases more,
She most, and in her look sums all Delight.
Such Pleasure took the Serpent to behold
This Flow'ry Plat, the sweet recess of *Eve*
Thus early, thus alone; her Heav'nly form

Angelic, but more soft, and Feminine,
Her graceful Innocence, her every Air
Of gesture or least action overaw'd
His Malice, and with rapine sweet bereav'd
His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
That space the Evil one abstracted stood
From his own evil, and for the time remain'd
Stupidly good, of enmity disarm'd. (IX, 439-44, 453-65)

The garden of Eden never seems more beautiful than when it is about to be lost; Eve never seems more delightful than just before her fall. The beauty and the delight are due in part to the poetic description, but also in part to the reader's awareness of their imminent loss, of their transience. By a similar token, Satan is never more pitiful than when he is "stupidly good," for we know how rare that moment is for the Evil one, and how fleeting. Coming to seduce, Satan is seduced. Satan, against his worse instincts, is momentarily charmed, immobilized by his victim. Taken aback by his own susceptibility, he remonstrates against himself, "Thoughts, whither have ye led me, with what sweet / Compulsion thus transported to forget / What hither brought us, hate, not love" (473-75). Thus he counters love with "Fierce hate," which he "recollects" with an effort of will (471). Satan's panegyric description of Eve reveals her strong attraction — so strong that his malice is "overaw'd," that he finds in love and beauty "terror" (490) which he can overcome only with "stronger hate" (491).

We are puzzled for a moment. Who is the one being seduced? The allusions to the gardens of Adonis, of Alcinoüs, and of Solomon evoke a temptress more than a tempter; it is "female charm" that predominates in those gardens.²¹ The last allusion — "where the Sapient King / Held dalliance with his fair *Egyptian* Spouse" — in particular nudges our thoughts toward Eve, who has twice been described as Adam's "fair Spouse" (IV, 742, V, 129).²² And "dalliance" is reminiscent of her "sweet reluctant amorous delay" (IV, 311). In the light of the allusion, Eve seems not so much the innocent victim of the satanic serpent as his match.

That the satanic serpent tries to seduce Eve is quite obvious. Wolfgang E. H. Rudat, for instance, has observed that "Satan as serpent . . . jealously attempts to usurp Adam's place and seduce Eve, *sexually*." The seduction is, however, complicated by the Circean allusion just before Eve notices the serpent. The poet tells us that the serpent's ingratiating overture fails to gain her attention immediately because she is used to receiving homage "From every Beast, more duteous at her call / Than at *Circean* call the Herd disguised" (IX, 521-22). At first glance the

analogy seems misaligned, for we would normally expect Satan, about to enchant Eve, to be likened to Circe, and Eve, about to be ensnared, to be likened to Circe's victims — "the Herd disguised." But instead the allusion points to a Circean Eve and a bewitched serpent. Noting the curious analogy, Rudat argues that "Milton endows Eve with the Circean power to transform Satan into a *phallic serpent*," thereby suggesting that "Eve is indirectly responsible for her own pursuit by the Serpent."²³

To me this suggests something else: Circean Eve and the satanic serpent *reflect* each other. While Eve is as yet unaware of Satan's presence, the reference to Circe implicates her and foreshadows her transformation into a "snare" (X, 873, XI, 165), the kind of "mortal snare" (IV, 8) that Satan himself personifies.

The reciprocal seductiveness of Eve and the serpent finds potent expression in their provocative eyes. The serpent, "Carbuncle his Eyes" (IX, 500), flaunts his voluptuous body "in sight of *Eve*, / To lure her Eye" (517-18). As Edward Sichi, Jr. has noted, "Carbuncle," in its sense of "lantern," "closely resembles that time-honored image used by Courtly Love poets of 'eyes darting contagious fire.'"²⁴ But one need not look outside *Paradise Lost* for such an image. Even before the Fall Eve "shot Darts of desire / Into all eyes" (VIII, 62-63), and Adam confessed his weakness "Against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance" (VIII, 533). The metaphor from archery, connoting passion and violence, seems out of place in the prelapsarian world. But we will no longer find the metaphor obtrusive after the Fall, when Eve's "Eye darted contagious Fire" (IX, 1036). The emphasis in the temptation scene on her eyes, objects which the serpent is trying to "lure," evokes prior and subsequent descriptions of Eve's luring eyes, no less flashy, aggressive, and dangerous than the serpent's "Carbuncle." And just as the serpent, by virtue of his beauty, turns the "Eye of Eve to mark his play" (IX, 528) and is "glad / Of her attention gain'd" (528-29), beautiful Eve at that moment is, according to Adam, also "longing to be seen" (X, 877) and, according to Milton, "desirous to make trial of her strength" (IX, Argument). She is apparently no less eager than Satan for their prospective confrontation.

Eve and the serpent continue to reflect and inspect each other during their meeting. Eve's encounter with the serpent recalls her encounter with her image upon first awakening into life. In both scenes, curiosity is aroused through the auditory faculty: in the earlier one she is aroused by "a murmuring sound / Of waters" (IV, 453-54); in the latter it is the "sound / Of rustling leaves" (IX, 518-19) produced by the serpent, who has been likened to a "surging Maze." In the earlier instance she encoun-

ters her image in the pool; in the latter, the serpent. Because her image and the serpent share similar physical attributes, as illustrated earlier, the temptation scene brings to mind the reason Comestor imputed to Satan for choosing the serpent — "like favors like."

The likeness is, however, more than physical. The serpent has regarded Eve earlier with love and terror; Eve's reaction to the serpent is a mixture of fascination and *amazement*. Tracking various "mazy" words in the poem, Giamatti notices "a movement whereby physical characteristics cease only to signify and simply become mental states."²⁵ Thus the serpent's "mazy folds" (IX, 161) and "surging Maze" (499) make way into Eve, who listens (to the beast) "Not unamaz'd" (552) and "Yet more amaz'd" (614). But Giamatti does not explain why it is the *serpent's* physical characteristics that become *Eve's* mental states. I believe these words provide another verbal mirror whereby the serpent is made to reflect Eve. Just as the serpent "Misleads th' amaz'd Night-wanderer from his way" (640), Eve will adopt tortuous expression to mislead Adam, though at this point the serpent's physical tangles may reflect no more than her mental confusion, "in wand'ring mazes lost."

The movement of starting back and forth, reminiscent of the figure at the pool and of "Serpent error wand'ring" (VII, 302), is repeated here, though again psychologically rather than literally. Eve is enticed by the serpent's flattery but wary of its excess; yet notwithstanding her awareness that his "overpraising leaves in doubt / The virtue of that Fruit" (IX, 615-16), she asks to be led to the tree. Recognizing the forbidden tree for what it is, she again draws back, recalling God's command, "Ye shall not eat . . . lest ye die" (662-63); but being "more soft" than angels (458), she will "yield" to the serpent's guileful arguments which, as previously mentioned, echo her own in the separation scene.

The subtle beast both elicits and replicates her wavering response. He begins the temptation by dazzling Eve with his voluptuous body and human speech, the one to attract, the other to amaze. The voluptuous body, the flashing colors, and the wanton dance are sensuous baits designed to lure Eve's eye. But the visual allurements is only an overture to the miracle of language, which takes the form of an amorist's serenade:

Wonder not, sovran Mistress, if perhaps
Thou canst, who are sole *Wonder*, much less arm
Thy looks, the Heav'n of mildness, with disdain,
Displeas'd that I approach thee thus, and *gaze*
Insatiate, I thus single, nor have fear'd
Thy *awful* brow, more *awful* thus retir'd.
Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair,

These *all things* living gaze on, *all things* thine
By gift, and thy Celestial Beauty adore
With ravishment beheld.
(IX, 532-41, emphasis added)

Echoing the voice in the dream, the speech once more sets up a symmetry between Eve and the serpent. They regard, or claim to regard, each other with mingled fear and fondness. Eve is asked not to "wonder," a word which connotes both amazement and fascination and which Eve will reiterate when she says with respect to the talking serpent that "such wonder claims attention due" (IX, 566). And they indeed give each other due attention. In words that again convey fear and appreciation, the serpent claims to "adore" Eve despite her "awful brow," to behold her "with ravishment."

The several pairs of identical words in the speech constitute a verbal mirror. The repetitions of "wonder" and "awful" blur the distinctions of Eve as the subject, and as an object of veneration. In "Wonder not," Eve is the implied subject and the serpent is the implied object; the serpent is saying, "Eve, do not wonder at me." But in "sole Wonder," Eve becomes the object of the serpent's admiration. (The serpent is again the object of wonder in line 566.) The first "awful" modifies her brow, but the second "awful" calls attention to the serpent's perception: it is the serpent that judges Eve to be "more awful thus retir'd." Similarly, Eve, the object of the serpent's "gaze" and of universal "gaze" ("Thee all things living gaze on"), is also the "mistress" of the gazers ("all things thine"). Their gazes answer her "looks." The shifts in personal focus which the pairs of identical words effect produce a ventriloquistic effect.

Other echoes reinforce the symmetry between Eve and the serpent. His emphasis on being "single" reminds us of Eve's single state, having separated from Adam for the moment. As the serpent begs Eve not to arm her look with disdain, one remembers that he has just armed himself with disdain (473-93) so as not to be "disarm'd" (465) by her beauty. His flattering compliment of Eve — "Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair" — chimes in with the narrator's description of the serpent as "lovely, never since of Serpent kind / Lovelier" (IX, 504-05). The serpent, that description continues, is lovelier than "those that in *Illyria* chang'd / *Hermione* and *Cadmus*, or the God / In *Epidaurus*." (505-07). Given the fearful symmetry between fair Eve and the lovely beast, William Empson's view (dismissed by Hughes) that these classical allusions imply that "Eve turned into a snake and became Satan's consort" may not be as far-fetched as it sounds.²⁶

Whether she literally turns into a snake or not, Eve wants to copy

the serpent. Admiring both his gorgeous shape and his gift of tongue, she inquires how he comes to possess the faculties of speech and reason. When the serpent answers that he has acquired both by eating the fair apples of a goodly tree, Eve assumes that she may by the same means ascend the scale of being. Such an assumption requires a twist of thought, for as Fish points out, "What holds for serpent, if it did hold, may not hold for man."²⁷ By thinking that she may improve herself by eating the apple, Eve tacitly identifies with the serpent, imputing a parallel between herself and the animal. As though the parallel were not transparent enough, Milton has Eve echo the serpent's argument before eating the fruit. Like the serpent, she pays tribute to the knowledge of good and evil, disparages the threat of death, questions God's motive in imposing the prohibition, and uses empirical evidence to evaluate the forbidden fruit (IX, 745-79). Even without her reiteration, one can assume from her act that the serpent's argument works. By making her rehearse the argument — reflecting the serpent verbally — Milton seems to insist that the serpent's argument is also Eve's own.

But Eve does not voice what is probably her strongest motive in wanting to taste the fruit: divine aspiration. "Nor was Godhead from her thought" (IX, 790), the narrator divulges; and we can infer from his remark that Eve succumbs to the desire to be seen a "Goddess among Gods, ador'd and serv'd / By angels numberless" (IX, 547-48). Like her tempter, Eve "trusted to have equal'd the most high" (I, 40). Like her tempter, who disdains submission (IV, 81-82), Eve wants to be equal or superior to Adam: "for inferior who is free?" (IX, 825). The "modest pride" she displayed at her first appearance now distends into the "considerate Pride" of Satan (I, 603); the cause of his fall is now hers.

When the poet has Eve parrot the serpent, and links the reason of her fall with that of Satan's, he goes far beyond the author of Genesis in stressing her culpability. In Genesis, "the serpent beguiled [Eve]" (iii, 13). Milton's Eve, by contrast, is hardly beguiled by the serpent; rather, she *concur's* with him.

After the Fall her wiles continue to bring Satan — the "wily Adder" (IX, 625) — to mind. Just as the Devil turns aside in envy upon witnessing the embrace of Adam and Eve, Eve cannot bear the thought (should only she die) of Adam in the company of another Eve. Both Eve and the serpent hide their dark motives "under show of Love well feign'd" (IX, 492) by pretending that they want to share their enlightenment with their victims. The speech with which Eve persuades Adam to eat the fruit is, as Fish observes, "a tissue of Satanic echoes."²⁸ Both the serpent and Eve offer themselves as proofs of the fruit's benign effects. The ser-

pent urged Eve, "reach then, and freely taste" (IX, 732); Eve, having eaten the fruit and acknowledged the serpent's "Experience" as her "Best guide" (IX, 807-09), urges Adam, "On my experience . . . freely taste" (IX, 988). After his fall Adam will openly link Eve and the serpent and wish that Eve would emit "color Serpentine" (X, 870) as a warning, "lest that too heav'nly form, pretended / To hellish falsehood, snare [men]" (X, 872-73).²⁹ What some earlier artists made explicit in paintings Milton has woven into poetry; he has blended the contours of Eve into those of the Eden serpent.

III

Milton's Eve is certainly not an innocent victim, whether or not she is "crooked" from the start, or "bent . . . / More to the part sinister" from her inception (X, 885-86). That she appreciates her beauty as much as does anyone else, that she dreams an alarming dream, that she enjoys spending time alone and receiving attention from beings other than Adam, and even that she shares certain physical characteristics with the serpent and admires the talking animal, are attributes sinless in themselves. But guided by Milton's warning voice, which importunately aligns Eve with Satan through reverberating verbal echoes, we cannot help seeing them as indicative of the "liability to fall with which man was created."³⁰ More importantly, when Eve finally crosses the boundary from innocence to sin by eating the fruit—an act putatively instigated by the satanic serpent—we must see her as at least collusive, and not merely deceived.

We can also see her as guilty at large. In the light of the persistent liaison between Eve and the serpent, it is tempting to view the serpent as a psychological projection, though Milton's Satan—like the Homeric gods—may seem far too convincing a presence to be treated allegorically. But just as the alleged god-betted transgressions in Homer are often consistent with what one would expect from the human culprit (so that never would a Hector abduct Helen or a Penelope elope with Paris because of divine intervention), the serpent in *Paradise Lost* may be seen as "an external agent who presses home the self-temptation," to use Stein's perception in another context.³¹

It is the attempt to dramatize this dual aspect of sin rather than any conscious attempt on Milton's part to stigmatize woman, as some feminist critics (e.g. Gilbert and Landy) claim, that chiefly accounts for the many parallels between Eve and the serpent. Nevertheless, these persistent parallels do, to some extent, give away the poet's attitude toward the opposite sex.³² Whereas Genesis merely records that the serpent beguiled Eve and Comestor merely suggests that the serpent resembled Eve, not vice versa, Milton takes pains to entwine the two. Notwithstanding

that the serpent as a phallic symbol lends itself more readily to association with Adam,³³ it is Adam who calls Eve a serpent, who hammers the homology while reproaching Eve: "with the Serpent meeting / Fool'd and beguil'd, by him thou, I by thee" (X, 879-80). The pronouns "thou" and "thee" conflate Eve as the beguiled victim and as the beguiling agent.

Although critics often cite this passage to demonstrate Milton's misogyny, a detailed examination of the homology—developed by the poet all along—suggests that his attitude toward women is rather one of sympathetic antipathy: they enchant him as much as the serpent enchants Eve; but unlike Eve, Milton is more than wary and all too mindful. He likens Eve to Pandora, "whom the Gods / Endow'd with all their gifts" (IV, 714-15), yet "O too like / In sad event," when "she ensnar'd / Mankind with her fair looks" (715-16, 717-18). Like Satan, Milton seems to find terror in love and beauty. Hence he sees in the captivating serpent a fit emblem for the First Mother. Both Eve and the serpent in *Paradise Lost* charm, ensnare; indeed both use their charm to ensnare. In both, to use Adam's words, a "too heav'nly form" is "pretended to hellish falsehood" (X, 872-73). But if Eve serves as a satanic agent by ushering sin and death into the world, and all our woe, it is also "by" her that "the Promis'd Seed shall all restore"; it is "her seed" that shall bruise the serpent's head (XII, 623, X, 181). The poet's aversion to women is so involved and interwoven with attraction that they are as inseparable as the knowledge of evil and good.

We will find no end to disentangling Milton's attitudes toward the first woman, or toward women in general, but will find ourselves lost in wandering mazes. Far less intricate, however, is his attitude toward human responsibility. In stressing the affinities between the serpent and Eve, the poet implies that external persuasion corresponds to personal desire. Cautioning Eve against separation because of the subtle foe, Adam no less insists that it is "within [herself] / The danger lies" (IX, 348-49). To cause human disobedience, the serpent that stalks Eden must worm his way into the "paradise within."

University of California, Los Angeles

NOTES

1. In writing this paper I have invoked the aid of John Anson, who first taught me how to read Milton, and of Henry Kelly, who illumined what in me is dark with his formidable scholarship; to both, my endless gratitude.

2. I, 34-36. Quotations of the poem are from *Paradise Lost: A Poem in Twelve Books*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1962).
3. Arnold Stein, *Answerable Style: Essays on "Paradise Lost"* (Minneapolis, 1953), p. 75.
4. Cf. Carl Jung's description of the "shadow" — one of the three components of the psyche — as "the invisible saurian tail that man still drags behind him," in *Psychological Reflections* (London, 1945), p. 217. Sandra Gilbert, in "Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton's *Bogey*," *PMLA* XCIII (1978), enumerates some of the parallels between Satan and Eve in order to show Milton's misogyny (372). I offer not only a more comprehensive study of the parallels but also a different interpretation of their significance, viewing the poet's attitude toward women (in my opinion an ambivalent rather than a downright misogynous one) as only a secondary cause for the parallels.
5. "Timens vero deprehendi a viro, mulierem minus providam et certam [sic; *lege* ceream] in vitium flecti aggressus est, et hoc per serpentem. . . . Elegit etiam quoddam genus serpentis. . . . virgineum vultum habens, quia similia similibus applaudunt" (*Historia Scholastica. Liber Genesis, in Patrologia latina*, ed. J. P. Migne vol. CXCVIII [1855], col. 1072; quoted in Kelly, "The Metamorphoses of the Eden Serpent During the Middle Ages and Renaissance," in *Viator* II (1971), 308).
6. The notion that the serpent resembles Eve also appears in an ancient Syrian biblical history, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures: A History of the Patriarchs and the Kings their Successors from the Creation to the Crucifixion of Christ*, trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (London, 1927), pp. 63-64: "And when she turned round towards him, she saw her own form [reflected] in him, and she talked to him; and Satan led her astray with his lying words, because the nature of woman is soft (or, yielding)." Kelly rightly concludes from this account "either that Eve looked like a serpent or that the serpent looked like a woman" ("The Metamorphoses," 310). Though the Syrian text is unlikely to have influenced *Paradise Lost*, the epithets chosen by the ancient author to describe "the nature of woman" — "soft (or, yielding)" — are also used by Milton repeatedly to describe Eve (IV, 298; IV, 309; IV, 310; IV, 471; IV, 489; VIII, 254; IX, 386; IX, 458; X, 865). Some forms of the female-headed serpent appear also in the *Chester Plays*, William Langland's *Piers the Plowman*, Arnould Gréban's *Le mystère de la passion*, Saint Bonaventure's commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis troiae*, Vincent of Beauvais's *Mirror of Nature*, Thomas of Cantimpré's *De natura rerum*, and Giambattista Andreini's *L'Adamo*. See Kelly, "The Metamorphoses," 319-22, and John K. Bonnell, "The Serpent with a Human Head in Art and in Mystery Play," *American Journal of Archaeology*, 2nd series, XXI (1917), 258-78.
7. Bonnell, "The Serpent," 257-78, hypothesizes that the woman-headed serpent originates in literary sources (i.e. Peter Comestor, Vincent de Beauvais, Guido delle Colonne, and the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*), which then influence the dramatic form, and that in turn influences the art form. Hence Michelangelo was following a tradition that was by his time two hundred years old. Kelly, however, points out to me that the hybrid figure appears in art before it appears in drama. For the divergent interpretations of the woman-headed serpent, see Alice Kemp-Welch, "The Woman-headed Serpent in Art," *Nineteenth Century and After* LII (1902), 983-91.
8. Watson Kirkconnell, *The Celestial Cycle: The Theme of "Paradise Lost" in World Literature with Translations of the Major Analogues* (Toronto, 1952), p. 242. Hughes, p. 213 n. 14, believes that Milton consciously departs from Andreini by introducing the satanic serpent as "Mere Serpent in appearance" (IX, 413).
9. J. B. Trapp, "The Iconography of the Fall of Man," in *Approaches to "Paradise*

- Lost*," ed. C. A. Patrides (London, 1968), pp. 223-65; Roland M. Frye, *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts: Iconographic Tradition in the Epic Poems* (Princeton, 1978), p. 104. Kelly alerts me to the duality in Frye's argument.
10. Diane McColley, *Milton's Eve* (Urbana, 1983), p. 8.
11. D. C. Allen, "Milton and the Name of Eve," *MLN* LXXXIV (1959), 682, 683.
12. Milton's inspiration may also have come from art. In a fourteenth-century French painting at the Louvre, entitled "Virgin and Child, with Eve (?) Beneath," and reproduced in Jeffrey M. Hoffeld, "Adam's Two Wives," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* XXVI (1968), 435, the female figure underneath the Virgin has a distinctive serpentine profile. Especially suggestive of a serpent are her mouth and her seemingly legless body. That she is Eve is suggested by her eating an apple. Hoffeld thinks that the woman is a conflation of Eve and Lilith (436). However, Bonnell, "The Serpent," 290 n. 2, points out that there is no proof of Lilith's influence, and Kelly, "The Metamorphoses," 302 n. 8, observes that Hoffeld has offered none.
13. Ann Davidson Ferry, *Milton's Epic Voice: The Narrator in "Paradise Lost"* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 112-15; Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in "Paradise Lost"* (1967; rpt. Berkeley, 1971), pp. 92-93; Christopher Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style* (Oxford, 1963), p. 110.
14. I owe this and several other valuable insights to my colleague Susan Brienza.
15. See note 6 above.
16. Though aware of the negative construction — "not with indented wave" — in the second passage, I believe that the negative qualifies "indented" rather than "wave"; the serpent is still wavy, though the wave moves vertically — in "rising folds" — not horizontally. A. Bartlett Giamatti notes that Milton's serpent is modeled on the seamstresses of Virgil: "pectora quorum inter fluctus arrecta iubaque / sanguineae superant undas; pars cetera pontum / pone legit sinuataque immensa volumine terga" ("Their bosoms rise amid the surge, and their crests, blood-red, overtop the waves; the rest of them skims the main behind and their huge backs curve in many a fold") (*Aeneid* II, 206-08; quoted and translated in Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic* [Princeton, 1966], p. 304 n. 13).
17. Philip E. Slater, *The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and Greek Family* (Boston, 1968), p. 81, observes that "clinging vine" is traditionally a "serpentine perception of femininity" and that Ovid explicitly links vines and serpentine curls in describing how Salmacis pursues Hermaphroditus,
- Surrounding him with arms, legs, lips, and hands
As though she were a snake caught by an eagle,
Who leaping from his claws wound her tall body
Around his head, and lashed his wings with her
Long tail, as though she were quick ivy tossing
Her vines round the thick body of a tree.
- (Metamorphoses IV, 357-62; quoted in Slater)
18. Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, p. 102, also notes that Eve "seems to curl, even coil, in the manner, perhaps, of a serpent."
19. D. C. Allen, "Milton's Eve and the Evening Angels," *MLN* LXXV (1959), 108-09. See also *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, vol. I, trans. Walter Scott (Oxford, 1924), pp. 121-23. Like the Ovidian story of Narcissus, the *Hermetica* episode underlines the relation between self-love and the Fall of Man.

20. John S. Diekhoff, "Eve, the Devil, and *Areopagitica*," *MLQ* V (1944), 429-34; Diekhoff analyzes the similarity and fallacy of the arguments used by Eve and Satan in the light of *Areopagitica*.

21. Nausicaä, the daughter of Alcinoüs, is in search of a husband; the ardent goddess woos the reluctant Adonis; Solomon, referred to elsewhere as "that uxorious King . . . Beguile'd by fair Idolatresses" (l. 444-45), extols the beauty of his spouse in the garden. For other allusions to temptresses in Milton's garden, see Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise*, pp. 318-34.

22. Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style*, p. 135.

23. Wolfgang E. H. Rudat, "Thy Beauty's Heav'nly Ray: Milton's Satan and the Circean Eve," *MQ* XIX (March 1985), 17, 18.

24. Edward Sichi, Jr., "The Serpent with Carbuncle Eyes: Milton's Use of 'Carbuncle' in *Paradise Lost*," *MQ* XIV (1980), 126.

25. Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise*, p. 306.

26. William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935; rpt. New York, 1974), p. 175.

27. Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, p. 250.

28. Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, p. 253.

29. Gilbert, "Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers," 372, believes that the hostility God sets between the woman and the serpent is "the discord necessary to divide those who are . . . too much alike, too much attracted to each other."

30. John Milton, *De doctrina Christiana*, trans. Charles R. Sumner, ed. James H. Hanford and W. H. Dunn, *The Complete Works of John Milton* (New York, 1933), vol. XV, p. 181.

31. Stein, *Answerable Style*, p. 75; there Stein is commenting on Adam's Fall.

32. In addition to the works by Gilbert and McColley cited above, see David Aers and Bob Hodge, "Rational Burning: Milton on Sex and Marriage," in *Milton Studies*, vol. XIII, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1979), pp. 3-33; S. A. Demetropoulos, "Eve as a Circean and Courty Fatal Woman," *MQ* IX (1975), 99-107; Marilyn R. Farwell, "Eve, the Separation Scene, and the Renaissance Idea of Androgyny," in *Milton Studies*, vol. XVI, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1982), pp. 3-20; Christine Froula, "When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy," *Critical Inquiry* X (1983), 321-47; Marcia Landy, "A Free and Open Encounter: Milton and the Modern Reader," in *Milton Studies*, vol. IX, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1976), pp. 3-36 and "Kinship and the Role of Women in *Paradise Lost*," in *Milton Studies*, vol. IV, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1972), pp. 3-18; Barbara K. Lewalski, "Milton on Women - Yet Once More," in *Milton Studies*, vol. VI, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1974), pp. 3-20; Joan Malory Webber, "The Politics of Poetry: Feminism and *Paradise Lost*," in *Milton Studies*, vol. XIV, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1980), pp. 3-24.

33. However, Slater, *The Glory of Hera*, pp. 80-83, 111-15, contends that the serpent has always been a bisexual symbol.

MILTON'S "DRAMATICK CONSTITUTION": THE CELESTIAL DIALOGUE IN PARADISE LOST, BOOK III

Michael Lieb

I

IN HIS criticism of *Paradise Lost*, a deservedly obscure eighteenth-century schoolmaster by the name of John Clarke once took Milton to task for introducing God and the Son as "Actors in his Poem." "A Poet," observed Clarke, "may contrive Scenes of Action, and find speeches for his Fellow Mortals of the highest Degree," but that poet dare not "bring down the most High into a Scene of Diversion, and assign him his Part of Acting and Speaking."¹ Although Clarke made no mention of specifically what "Scene of Diversion" he had in mind, we may safely assume that the dialogue in heaven in Book III is an excellent candidate. Few scenes in *Paradise Lost* have occasioned as much difficulty as that one.²

Responding to the scene, critics have traditionally objected not only to Milton's handling of character delineation but to his treatment of theological doctrine. In both respects, they have taken issue with Milton's attempt to render God and the Son dramatically. Those troubled by character delineation have customarily leveled their barbs at the figure of God. Pope's quip that "God the Father turns a School-Divine"³ implies as much the failure of drama as the impropriety of attempting drama under such circumstances in the first place. These are exactly the issues that underlie more recent criticism of the scene. William Empson's charge that Milton's God is reminiscent of Uncle Joe Stalin represents the crude extreme to which a criticism of Milton's dramaturgy is liable to extend.⁴ Complementing the criticism of Milton's delineation of God is that which calls into question the theology his deity espouses. This criticism faults Milton for his failure to make his theology palatable. That failure, argue the proponents of such a view, is the result not just of the theology itself but of the manner in which it is transmitted. For these critics, the theology is transmitted in a way that suggests nothing more than the flat presentation of dogma by an unpleasant and pedantic figure who has his "Yes Man" sitting at his right-hand side ready to assent to anything his Father might hand down.⁵ What results for those