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The genesis of gendered subjectivity in the divorce tracts and in *Paradise Lost*

It appears that one can now speak of "third-wave feminism" as well as "post-feminist feminism." Like other labels generated by the historical moment to which they refer, these await a lengthy period of interrogation. But if they should stick, their significance will be associated with the variety of attacks mounted against Western bourgeois or liberal feminism over the past decade and a half. Now, as never before, what has to be contended with – precisely because it has been exposed in the process of contestation and critique – is the historically determinate and class-inflected nature of the discourse of "equal rights." The questions, equal with whom, and to what end? have been raised in ways that have begun to expose how, ever since the early modern period, bourgeois man has proved the measure. They have also shown how the formal or legal status of this elusive "equality" tends by its very nature to protect the status quo.

Because much academic criticism on *Paradise Lost*, especially that produced in North America, has been written within a liberal–humanist tradition that wants Milton to be, among other things, the patron saint of the companionate marriage, it has frequently made use of a notion of equality that is both mystified and mystifying. The undeniable emphasis on mutuality to be found in *Paradise Lost* – the mutual dependency of Eve and Adam on one another, their shared responsibility for the Fall – is for this reason often treated as if it somehow entailed a significant form of equality. Differences that in *Paradise Lost* are ordered hierarchically and ideologically tend to be neutralized by a critical discourse interested in formal balance

and harmonious pairing. To take just one, not especially contentious, example, Milton is said to go out of his way to offset the superiority associated with Adam in his naming of the animals by inventing an equivalent task for Eve: her naming of the flowers. In this reading, Milton, a kind of proto-feminist, generously gives the power of naming to both woman and man.[1] The rhetorical effectiveness of this point obviously depends in important ways upon the suppression of features suggestive of asymmetry. Left unquestioned must be the differences between Adam's authoritative naming of the creatures – an activity associated with the rational superiority and dominion of "Man" when it is presented by Adam, who in Book VIII relates to Raphael this episode of the creation story in the second chapter of Genesis – and Eve's naming of the flowers, which is revealed only incidentally in her response to the penalty of exile delivered in Book XI. In a speech that has the form of a lament for the garden she has just been told they are to leave, Eve's naming in Book XI appears in such a way that it seems never to have had the precise status of an event. It is, instead, inseparably a feature of her apostrophic address to the flowers themselves: "O flow'rs / . . . which I bred up with tender hand / From the first op'ning bud, and gave ye Names" (XI.273–7).[2] Here Eve's "naming" becomes associated not with rational insight and dominion but rather with the act of lyrical utterance, and therefore with the affective responsibilities of the domestic sphere into which her subjectivity has always already fallen.

In recent years, a remarkably similar critical current, intent on neutralizing oppositions, has been at work in feminist biblical commentaries on Genesis. Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, claims for the spiritual equality of the sexes have very often had recourse to Genesis 1.27, "So God created man [*hā'ādām*, ostensibly a generic term] in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."[3] This verse, which is part of what is now considered the Priestly or "P"creation account (Genesis 1–2.4a), has always co-existed somewhat uneasily with the more primitive and more obviously masculinist Yahwist or "J"creation account in chapter 2, where the creator makes man from the dust of the ground (thereby making *hā'ādām* punningly relate to *hā'ādāmâ*, the word for ground or earth) and woman from this man's rib. Within a specifically Christian context, the relationship between the two accounts has been – at least potentially – problematical, since 1 Timothy 2:11–14 uses the Yahwist account to bolster the prohibition against women taking positions of authority within the Church: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Recently, in an effort to reconcile feminism and Christianity, Phyllis Trible has tried to harmonize the differences between the Priestly and the Yahwist creation accounts. Trible holds that the exegetical tradition

alone is responsible for the sexist meanings usually attributed to the Yahwist creation story, which she renarrates using methods that are basically formalist.

More specifically, Trible argues that the second chapter of Genesis tells the story not of the creation of a patriarchal Adam, from whom a secondary Eve is derived, but the story of the creation of a generic and androgynous earth creature or "man" to whom the sexually distinct woman and man are related as full equals. Throughout, Trible's retelling is strongly motivated by the desire to neutralize the discrepancy between the "P" and the "J" accounts by assimilating "J" to "P," which is assumed to recognize the equality of the sexes and therefore to provide the meaning of the two creation accounts taken together as one. Because "P" suggests the possibility of a symmetrical, non-hierarchical relationship between male and female, "J" is said by Trible to tell the story of the creation of a sexually undifferentiated creature who becomes "sexed" only with the creation of woman. The simultaneous emergence of woman and man as equals is signalled, she argues, when Yahweh brings the newly fashioned partner to the previously undifferentiated *hā'ādām* or "man," who responds with the lyrically erotic utterance: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23) (in Trible's reading "taken out of" means "differentiated from").[4]

Trible's revisionary and profoundly ahistorical reading is significant in large part because it has been so widely influential. Among feminist theologians it would seem to have established a new orthodoxy. And it has recently been ingeniously elaborated for a secular readership by Mieke Bal, who assumes with Trible that the commentator can, by an effort of will, position herself outside the traditions of masculinist interpretation; and that Genesis bears no lasting traces of the patriarchal society which produced it.[5] Yet it is far too easy to adopt the opposing or rather complementary view that Genesis is a text inaugurating a transhistorically homogeneous patriarchal culture. This is, unfortunately, a view that is frequently expressed in connection with *Paradise Lost*. For in spite of the existence of scholarly studies of Genesis in its various exegetical traditions, the view that the relationship of *Paradise Lost* to Genesis is basically direct or at least unproblematically mediated continues to flourish. And so, as a result, does an entire network of misogynistic or idealizing commonplaces and free-floating sexual stereotypes, relating, indifferently, to Genesis and to this institutionally privileged text by Milton, English literature's paradigmatic patriarch.

The notion of a timeless and ideologically uninflected "patriarchy" is of course vulnerable on many counts, not least of which is its capacity to neutralize the experience of oppression. I would therefore like to attempt to situate historically Milton's own appropriation of the Genesis creation

accounts. In the process, I hope also to draw a preliminary sketch, in outline, of the genealogy of that seductive but odd couple, mutuality and equality. It is certainly not difficult to recognize the reading given Genesis by Trible and Bal as a product of its time. Especially in North America, the notion of an originary androgyny has had tremendous appeal to mainstream or liberal feminism. Taken to represent an ideal yet attainable equality of the sexes, androgyny is often associated metaphorically with an ideal and egalitarian form of marriage. A passionate interest in this very institution makes itself felt throughout Milton's divorce tracts, in which his interpretation of the two creation accounts first appears. Milton's exegesis, too, is the product of an ideologically overdetermined desire to unify the two different creation accounts in Genesis. Not surprisingly, at the same time it is representative of the kind of masculinist "mis"-reading that Trible and Bal seek to overturn. By emphasizing its historical specificity, however, I hope to show that it is so for reasons that cannot be universalized.

II

Milton appropriates these two texts, first in the divorce tracts and then in *Paradise Lost*, by adopting the radically uni-levelled or this-worldly Reformed method of reconciling them. For leading commentators such as Calvin and Pareus, the two accounts do not correspond to two stages in the creation of humankind, the intelligible and the sensible, as they do in an earlier, Greco-Christian tradition. Indeed there are not in their view two accounts in this sense at all but instead one story told in two different ways, once, in the first chapter of Genesis, in epitome, and then, in the second chapter, in a more elaborated form. Simplifying matters considerably, and using terms introduced into the analysis of narrative by Gérard Genette, one could say that in the view articulated especially cogently by Calvin and then elaborated, aggressively, by Milton, the *story* consists of the creation in the image of God of a single being supposed to be representative of humankind, Adam, and then the creation of Eve; the *narrative discourse* distributes this story by presenting it first in a kind of abstract and then in a more detailed or amplified narrative fashion. More specifically, the first two statements of Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him," are thought to refer to the creation of the representative Adam, told in a more leisurely and graphic fashion as a creation involving the use of the dust of the ground in the second chapter; while the concluding "male and female created he them" is taken to refer to the creation from this Adam of his meet help, Eve.

Echoing similar statements by Pareus, Milton writes of the second chapter's narrative of Eve's creation for Adam: "This second chapter is granted to be a commentary on the first, and these verses granted to be an exposition of that former verse, 'Male and female created he them.'"[6] Yet

the second chapter can have the status of a commentary in part because of the gaps, ambiguities, or troublesome suggestions to be found in the first. Commenting on the blessing of fertility in Genesis 1:28, for example, Calvin says that it is actually given to the human couple after they have been joined in "wedlocke," even though this event is not narrated until the following chapter.[7] As this indicates, for Protestant commentators, in so far as the rhetorically amplified second version is capable of interpreting and completing the account that comes before it in this way, it is the last creation account that tends to take precedence over the first.

If the Protestant exegetes Milton cites in his divorce tracts find the meaning of "male and female created he them" in the narrative of the creation of a help meet for Adam, they do so by reading that narrative ideologically, as proving that marriage, far from being what in their view the Roman Church would have it, a remedy prescribed for the spiritually weak, is divinely instituted, indeed recommended. That woman was created solely or even primarily for the purposes of procreation is the low-minded or "crabbed" (Milton's adjective) opinion the Protestant doctrine of marriage sees itself called to overturn.[8] Emphasizing, eloquently, the psychological needs sanctioned by the deity's words instituting marriage ("It is not good that the man should be alone," Genesis 2:18), the Reformers enable an emerging bourgeois culture to produce what has the appearance at least of an egalitarian view of the marital relation. The very phrase "meet for him" is said by Calvin to suggest in the Hebrew *kĕneged*, the quality of being "like or answerable unto" (*quia illi respondeat*) the man and to indicate vividly that psychological rather than physical likeness founds marriage as an institution.[9] Milton endorses this view when he takes the untranslatably expressive Hebrew "originall" to signify "*another self, a second self, a very self itself*" (*T* 600), and also when he has the divine interlocutor promise Adam, "Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self, / Thy wish, exactly to thy heart's desire" (*PL* VIII.450–1).

As has often been pointed out, in the divorce tracts Milton raises to unprecedented and undreamt of heights this early modern tendency to idealize the marriage bond. The extent to which he relies upon an implicit privileging of "J" over "P" (indeed, over the other texts he treats, as well) in order to do so has, however, not been commented upon. Milton's advocacy of a more liberalized interpretation of the grounds for divorce proceeds by countering the mean-spirited misinterpretations of scripture promulgated by scholastics and canonists.[10] On its more constructive front, it seeks to harmonize different and radically conflicting scriptural texts. The most taxing exegetical feat Milton has to perform is the reconciliation of Matthew 19:3–11, which suggests that remarriage after divorce is forbidden on grounds other than "fornication," and Deuteronomy 24:1–2, which Milton reads as sanctioning divorce for reasons of what we would now call incompatibility. *Tetrachordon*, the tract in which Milton's skills as

exegete are most on display, announces in its very title his determination to establish unity and sameness in the place of seeming difference and contradiction. Meaning "four-stringed," and thus referring to the four-toned Greek scale, *Tetrachordon* attempts to harmonize what on the title page are referred to as the "foure chief places in Scripture, which treat of Mariage, or nullities in Mariage." The first text given on the title page is "Gen. 1.27.28 compar'd and *explain'd by* Gen. 2.18.23.24" (*T* 577; my emphasis).[11]

The explaining of Genesis 1 *by* Genesis 2 is of multi-fronted strategic importance to Milton's polemical attack on existing English divorce laws, which don't properly recognize the spiritual nature of marriage. First and foremost, it permits Milton to exploit rhetorically the sexual connotations of "male and female," essential to the divorce tracts' central, most tirelessly worded argument, which is that neither sexual union in and of itself nor procreation is the primary end of marriage as originally constituted. Commenting directly on "Male and female created he them" in *Tetrachordon*, Milton states it has reference to "the right, and lawfulness of the mariage bed." When relating this text to its immediate context, he claims that sexual union is an "inferior" end to that implied by the earlier "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Milton's detailed exegesis of which I'll be coming back to later on) (*T* 592). As this suggests, a bi-polar and hierarchical ordering of the spiritual and physical dimensions of experience structures many of the exegetical moves in these tracts. The following commentary on "male and female" is fairly representative, and illustrates, in addition, the important role played by "J:"

> He that said *Male and female created he them*, immediately before that said also in the same verse, *In the Image of God created he him*, and redoubl'd it, that our thoughts might not be so full of dregs as to urge this poor consideration of *male and female*, without remembring the noblenes of that former repetition; lest when God sends a wise eye to examin our triviall glosses, they be found extremly to creep upon the ground: especially since they confesse that what here concerns mariage is but a brief touch, only preparative to the institution which follows more expressely in the next Chapter. . . .
>
> (*T* 592)

The divorce tracts seek to persuade the mind that doesn't want to creep upon the ground that it should be duly impressed with the fact that in Genesis 2:18 God himself speaks, revealing in no uncertain terms what the end of marriage is: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Expounding the true meaning of the earlier verse, "Male and female created he them," this verse declares "by the explicite words of God himselfe" that male and female is none other "than a fit help, and meet society" (*T* 594). Milton is

willing to put this even more strongly. It's not just that we have here the words of God himself, expounding the meaning of an earlier text. God here actually explains *himself*: "For God does not heer precisely say, I make a female to this male, as he did briefly before, but expounding himselfe heer on purpos, he saith, because it is not good for man to be alone, I make him therefore a meet help" (*T* 595).

In Milton's exegetical practice, then, "J"'s narrative makes possible a spiritualized interpretation of the more lowly and bodily "male and female." Indeed, "J"'s narrative, understood as instituting a relationship primarily psychological, provides the very basis for the passages emphasizing mutuality to be found throughout the divorce tracts. The above citations don't begin to convey the eloquence with which Milton can celebrate the pleasures of a heterosexual union that is ideally – that is, on the spiritual plane intended by its divine institution – fitting or meet. And there are numerous other moments in these works where without rhetorical flourish mutuality is clearly asserted or implied. The woman and man of the marriage relation can, for example, be referred to as "helps meete for each other."[12] On a more practical level, and of direct relevance to the legal reforms he is proposing, is the statement Milton offers of his position when opening the first chapter of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*: "*That indisposition, unfitnes, or contrariety of mind, arising from a cause in nature unchangable, hindring and ever likely to hinder the main benefits of conjugall society, which are solace and peace, is a greater reason of divorce then naturall frigidity, especially if there be no children, and that there be mutuall consent*" (*DDD* 242). The explicit reference to "mutuall consent" here is matched or perhaps even deliberately introduced by the opening words of the subtitle appearing in both the first and second editions of this work: "Restor'd to the Good of Both Sexes, From the bondage of Canon Law, and other mistakes. . . ."

Yet much as the dominant discourse of the academy might like to celebrate this praiseworthy attention to mutuality, there are very few passages of any length in the divorce tracts that can be dressed up for the occasion. For over and over again, this laudable mutuality loses its balance, teetering precariously on the brink of pure abstraction. And the reason it does so is that it stands on the ground (to recall the play on *hā'ādāmâ*) of a lonely Adam who is not in any sense either ungendered or generic. It becomes clear, finally, that the concluding phrase of Milton's position-statement – "and that there be mutuall consent" – is not expected to stand up in a court of law. In the penultimate chapter of the second edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton states his view "that the absolute and final hindring of divorce cannot belong to any civil or earthly power, against the will and consent of both parties, *or of the husband alone*" (*DDD* 344; my emphasis). Even if this could, improbably, be attributed to a moment's forgetfulness on the part of an author busy revising and enlarging

his original, it still wouldn't be able to pass itself off as an instance of simple self-contradiction. For as I hope to show, this particular assertion is also the self-consistent outcome of the deeply masculinist assumptions at work in Milton's articulation of a radically bourgeois view of marriage.

Time and again, the language of the tracts passes through the use of plural forms potentially inclusive of both sexes only to come to rest with a non-generically masculine "he." As the discussion up to this point has indicated, in so far as the story of Eve's creation from Adam's rib is thought to articulate the Protestant doctrine of marriage, it is not her creation *after* Adam *per se* that is so significant but her creation *for* him, to remedy his loneliness. The egalitarian sentiments expressed, sporadically, throughout the divorce tracts therefore cannot finally obscure Eve's secondary status as a "gift" from one patriarch to another. Created for Adam, Eve is, as Adam puts it in *Paradise Lost*, "Heav'n's last best gift" (V.19). Yet Eve is also, of course, created *from* Adam, as well as *for* him. And in Milton's view, as Adam's "likeness" Eve does not even have the status – to use Satan's description of "man" in *Paradise Lost* – of the Father's "latest," meaning most recent, "image" (IV.567). For by unifying the two creation stories in the way Reformed principles permit him to, Milton's exegesis makes possible the production of two ideologically charged and historically specific readings, contradictorily related: on the one hand an interpretation of "male and female" that psychologizes heterosexual union and dignifies marriage, and on the other an explication of "created man in his image" that tends to restrict the meaning of "man" to an individual Adam, from whom and for whom the female is then made.

It is important to put this exactly, for of course biblical commentators always claim that woman is also in some sense made in the image of God. Calvin, like Milton, however, locates the generic sense of "man" directly in the first and gendered man's representative status. Commenting on Genesis 2:18, "I will make him an help meet for him," Calvin responds to the question, why isn't the plural form "Let us make" used here, as it was in the creation of "man"?:

> Some think, that by this speach, the difference which is betweene both sexes is noted, and that so it is shewed, how much more excellent the man is, then the woman. But I like better of another interpretation, which differeth somewhat, though it be not altogether contrarie: namely, that when in the person of man, mankinde was created, the common worthinesse of the whole nature, was with one title generally adorned, where it is said, *Let us make man*: and that it was not needful to be repeated in the creating of the woman, which was nothing else but the addition and furniture of the man [quae nihil aliud est quam viri accessio]. It cannot be denied, but the woman also was created after the image of God, though in the seconde degree. Whereupon it followeth, that the same which was spoken in the creation of the man, perteineth to womankind.[13]

Milton's stridently masculinist, "Hee for God only, shee for God in him" in *Paradise Lost* obviously goes much further than Calvin in drawing out the masculinist implications of this hermeneutical practice, which forges an identity between the generic and the gendered "man." In *Tetrachordon*, too, Milton pursues the logic of this exegesis with a maddening and motivated precision. In his commentary on "in the image of God created he him," the intermediate statement of Genesis 1:27, he states that "the woman is not primarily and immediately the image of God, but in reference to the man," on the grounds that though the "Image of God" is common to them both, "had the Image of God been equally common to them both, it had no doubt bin said, In the image of God created he them" (*T* 589).

So it continues to matter that Adam was formed first, then Eve. As a further means of taking the measure of Milton's interest in this priority, I would now like to discuss three seventeenth-century texts more favourably disposed towards an egalitarian interpretation of Genesis. Although research in this area is still underway, it is safe to say that Milton could not but have known that questions of priority figure prominently in the Renaissance debate over "woman" we now know as the "Querelle des Femmes." In *A Mouzell for Melastomus, the cynicall bayter of, and foule mouthed barker against Evahs sex*, for example, one of the feminist responses to Joseph Swetnam's *The Araignment of lewd, idle, forward and unconstant women*, Rachel Speght appeals several times to the privilege assumed to be a property of firstness. Speght mentions that although it is true that woman was the first to sin, it is also woman who receives the "first promise" that God makes in Paradise; she argues that the dignity of marriage is proved by Jesus honouring a wedding ceremony with "the first miracle that he wrought;" and that the spiritual equality of the sexes is shown when after his Resurrection Christ "appeared unto a woman first of all other."[14]

In the restricted intellectual economy of the "Querelle," orthodox views of male superiority are frequently countered by paradoxical assertions of female superiority. Lastness is therefore placed in the service of overturning firstness, as in Joan Sharpe's poetic defense of women against Swetnam's *Araignment*, where it is claimed: "Women were the last worke, and therefore the best, / For what was the end, excelleth the rest."[15] Speght, however, deliberately avoids the use of this kind of paradox. Like other Renaissance and Reformed commentators, preachers and courtesy-book writers, Speght places a strong emphasis on marriage as involving the "mutuall participation of each others burden." And this emphasis is sustained rhetorically throughout the tract. For example, while accepting the conventional view that woman is "the weaker vessel," Speght supplies a

subtly polemical reference to man as "the stronger vessel."[16] In deploying a linguistic stress on balance and mutuality to neutralize hierarchical oppositions, this young, early seventeenth-century Protestant may very well be the most important unsung foremother of modern liberal feminist commentators on Genesis and on *Paradise Lost*.

Speght does not offer any programmatic statements on the relation of "P" to "J," nor does she attempt systematically to assimilate one to the other. But like all feminist participants in the "Querelle des Femmes," she assumes that Genesis 1:26 and 27 provide a clear statement of the spiritual equality of the sexes. The passage in which she briefly explicates Genesis 1:27 is distinctive, however, in its provisional but decidedly revisionary reconciliation of the two creation accounts: "in the Image of God were they both created; yea and to be brief, all the parts of their bodies, both externall and internall, were correspondent and meete each for other."[17] By referring to both woman and man, and in relation to one another, the terms "correspondent and meete" ("correspondent" being, as modern commentators point out, a good translation of the Hebrew *kĕneged*) deftly unite the "male and female created he them" of the "P" account with the account in "J" of Eve's creation for Adam, which here, momentarily, loses its narrative identity. Speght's brief exegesis carefully preserves an emphasis on bodily fitness, while pointedly ignoring questions of chronology that might threaten the egalitarian statement.

At one point Speght refers to marriage as "a merri-age, and this worlds Paradise, where there is mutuall love."[18] The same celebratory word-play ("the very name whereof should portend unto thee merry-age") appears in a work published just two years before Swetnam's provocative tract, Alexander Niccholes' *A Discourse, of Marriage and Wiving*. Interesting for, among other things, its citation of lines from the Player Queen's speech in *Hamlet*, Niccholes' *Discourse* eulogizes the special pleasures of marital friendship in one of the very phrases used in *Tetrachordon*: the wife is "such a friend, which is to us a second selfe."[19] Niccholes' brief commentary on the two creation accounts differs significantly from Milton's, however. Appearing in the first chapter, "Of the First Institution and Author of Marriage," Niccholes' exegetical remarks follow the citation of Genesis 2:18 ("It is not good for the man to bee alone"):

> so the creation of the woman was to be a helper to the man, not a hinderer, a companion for his comfort, not a vexation to his sorrow, for *consortium est solatium*, Company is comfortable though never so small, and Adam tooke no little joy in this his single companion, being thereby freed from that solitude and silence which his lonenesse would else have bene subject unto, had there beene no other end nor use in her more, then this her bare presence and society alone: But besides all this, the earth is large and must be peopled, and therefore they are now the Crowne of his

> Workemanship, the last and best and perfectest peece of his handiworke divided into Genders, as the rest of His creatures are, Male and Female, fit and enabled *Procreare sibi similem* to bring forth their like, to accomplish his will, who thus blessed their fruitfulnesse in the Bud: Increase and multiply, and replenish the earth.[20]

In this passage, as in the divorce tracts, the two different creation accounts, presented in their "real" order of occurrence, are discussed as if each revealed a different end or benefit of the first institution. And "J"'s narrative of the creation of a meet help for Adam, given a strictly psychological and social interpretation, is given priority over "P"'s. But Niccholes significantly omits any discussion of the creation of "man" in God's image. This absence permits the plural "they" easily to take over, so that it is the (now happily united) first man and woman alike who are "the last and best and perfectest peece of his handiworke." Although Niccholes mentions that woman was made both "for" and "out of" man, he maintains his emphasis on mutuality by erasing any explicit or evaluative commentary on her having been made *after* man, as well.

The commentary I would like to examine next is one produced during the same period as the divorce tracts, that is, at the very time when egalitarian issues of all kinds were being hotly contested, and when women in the sectaries not only laid claim to their spiritual equality with men on the basis of Genesis 1:27 and other texts, but publicly proclaimed the extra-textual significance of this equality by preaching and prophesying.[21] Unlike Speght's and Niccholes', the text I turn to now belongs, officially, to the commentary genre. Issued in association with the Westminster Assembly and published in 1645, the annotations on Genesis in *Annotations Upon All the Books of the Old and New Testaments* have not, to my knowledge, ever been studied.[22] Yet they shed an extraordinarily clear, not to say glaringly bright, light on the distinctive and motivated features of Milton's exegesis.

An annotation on 1:26 takes up directly the question of the meaning of the signifier "man" or "Adam." With reference to the phrase "let them" (in "And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea," etc.), the annotation states: "The word *man*, or the Hebrew, *Adam*, taken not personally or individually for one single person, but collectively in this verse, comprehendeth both male and female of mankind: and so it may well be said, not *let him*, but *let them* have dominion." Here the generic sense of *hā'ādām* is made completely to override the gender-specific sense. To this end, the use of the plural pronoun in the latter section of Genesis 1:26 is privileged over the singular pronoun, used with reference to the image ("in the image of God created he him"). This annotation alone therefore reveals a process of interpretation diametrically opposed to that at work in *Tetrachordon*, where, as we have seen, Milton seizes upon the difference between singular

and plural forms in Genesis 1:26 and 27 to argue that only the gender-specific Adam is made immediately in the image of God.

What makes comparison of the *Annotations* with *Tetrachordon* possible and of crucial importance is that both accept the Reformed view of the relationship between the two creation accounts. Adam and Eve are said to be formed on the same, that is, the sixth, day, but their creations are presented first in chapter 1, where "their creation in the generall was noted with other creatures," and then again in chapter 2, where "in regard of the excellencie of mankind above them all, God is pleased to make a more particular relation of the manner of their making, first of the man, vers. 7. and here [vers. 22] of the woman." Yet as these words suggest, the *story* assumed by the *Annotations* is slightly different from Milton's, which starts unabashedly with a "man" taken personally or individually. The difference is fine, but extremely significant. Like Milton and other Protestant commentators, the *Annotations* rejects the view that male and female were created simultaneously, together with the view that both sexes were originally embodied, hermaphrodite-like, in a single being. "J"'s narrative ordering is respected, which means that woman was indeed created after man. But this is how the gloss on verse 27's "male and female" puts it:

> Not at once, or in one person, but severally; that is, though he united them in participation of his image, he distinguished them into two sexes, male and female, for the increase of their kinde: their conformitie in participation of Gods Image is clearely manifest by many particulars, for in most of the respects fore-mentioned, Annotation in ver. 26, the image of God is equally communicated to them both, and Eve was so like to Adam (except the difference of sexe which is no part of the divine image) in the particulars fore-mentioned, that in them, as she was made after the image of Adam, she was also made after the image of God: as if one measure be made according to the standard, an hundred made according to that, agree with the standard as well as it.

By associating differences between the sexes solely with reproduction, this comment seems to hearken back to a Platonically inflected division between the spiritual and the physical. The concluding analogy, however, shows this truly remarkable text grappling with hierarchically ordered notions of secondariness. Working with reference to the production of things in the form of commodities, the analogy attempts to take on the difficulties resulting from the view that man and woman were made "severally." And it tries to effect, on its own, an egalitarian synthesis of "P" and "J." That man was first made in the image of God is implicitly conceded. But that woman was made "after" man becomes a statement referring not so much to an order of temporality as to an order of materiality. Woman is made "after" the image of Adam in the sense of being made "according to the standard" of the image of Adam. The analogy argues, by ellipsis, that since Adam was

himself really created "after" the image of God, which is the original "standard," being created "after" Adam's image, Eve is equally created "after" the image of God. Thanks to this highly ingenious and polemically motivated analogy, Eve's being created "after" Adam loses its usual sense of secondariness.

Read in the context of other learned Protestant biblical commentaries, this analogy has a jarring effect since, in exceeding by ninety-nine the requirements of logic, it seems to testify to the contemporary phenomenon of the growth of mercantile capital. For the sake of an egalitarian synthesis between "P" and "J," this workmanly analogy tries to undermine not only a hierarchically inflected logic of temporality but also the generally Platonic logic whereby original is privileged over copy. It is true that man is still, quite literally, the "measure." And to give the analogy its force, woman is placed in the position of being not the first commodity made "after" this measure but rather the "hundred" that can be produced on its basis. The logic deployed by the analogy from production insists, however, that it is not really possible to measure any residual differences between the image of God, man, and woman. Of the great variety of attempts made in the Renaissance and seventeenth century to come to Eve's defense, this must be the least chivalrous in content, the most lacking in conventional grace or charm. But it definitely does the job. And it certainly establishes, dramatically, the possibilities open to Milton, which he rejected.

In rejecting a position like that of the *Annotations*, Milton implicitly takes what would seem, from another perspective, though, to be a "progressive" stance, namely that the difference between woman and man is not a simple matter of biology; that it is not a difference of sex *per se*. In both *Tetrachordon* and *Colasterion* Milton rejects the view that Adam would have been given a male not a female partner had companionship been the end of marriage. The following passage from *Tetrachordon*, which comments on the all-important "*It is not good for man to be alone*," suggests why Milton would not want to imagine Eve's being created according to the same "standard" as Adam:

> And heer *alone* is meant alone without woman, otherwise *Adam* had the company of God himself, and Angels to convers with; all creatures to delight him seriously, or to make him sport. God could have created him out of the same mould a thousand friends and brother *Adams* to have bin his consorts, yet for all this till *Eve* was giv'n him, God reckn'd him to be alone.
>
> (*T* 595)

By specifying a desire that only "woman" can satisfy, and by associating that desire with a transcendence of sexual difference as vulgarly understood, the divorce tracts seem almost to open up a space for the category of "gender." Yet that this space is in no sense neutral can be seen in the

language with which friendship between men gets differentiated from the marital relation. In *Colasterion* Milton opposes "one society of grave freindship" to "another amiable and attractive society of conjugal love."[23] Elsewhere Milton can associate the marriage relationship with the need man has for "sometime slackning the cords of intense thought and labour" (*T* 596); or he can refer to the seeking of "solace in that free and lightsome conversation which God & man intends in mariage" (*DDD* 273). It should go without saying that man can have this need for companionship remedied, can intend to enjoy "lightsome conversation" as opposed to "grave freindship," only if woman is constituted as less grave, more attractive, more lightsome and more amiable than her male counterpart; and if both she and marriage itself are associated with a world apart.

III

As has already been suggested, the priority bestowed upon Adam in Milton's divorce tracts is not associated directly with the order of creation. It tends, instead, to be inscribed in the divine words instituting marriage, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). These words, which Milton frequently refers to simply as "the institution," are in turn often taken to gesture towards a prior loneliness or "rational burning" experienced by the first man, Adam. I have already argued that the priority Milton gives "J" over "P" is inscribed indelibly in every one of his major rhetorical and logical moves. In concluding this discussion of the divorce tracts, I would like to show how consistently or systematically this priority is associated with the deity's instituting words and thus, by implication, with Adam's needs.

It has not yet been mentioned that Matthew 5:31, 32 and Matthew 19:3–11, which together constitute one of the four texts treated in *Tetrachordon*, and which appear unequivocally to forbid divorce except for fornication, are susceptible to Milton's polemical appropriation of them precisely because in chapter 19 Jesus is represented as quoting from Genesis. The relevant verses, cited by Milton, are the following, verses 3–6:

> The Pharisees also came unto [Jesus], tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

The two texts cited here are the now-familiar "male and female created he them" in Genesis 1:27 and "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen.

2:24). Milton's strategy in commenting on the verses from Matthew is to subvert their literal and accepted meaning by referring the citations back to the divine words of institution, which, he points out, are *not*, significantly, quoted. Although the tempting Pharisees, his immediate interlocutors, aren't worthy of receiving this instruction, Jesus's intention, Milton argues, is to refer us back to the uncited words of institution in chapter 2, "which all Divines confesse is a commentary to what [Jesus] cites out of the first, the *making of them Male and Female*" (*T* 649). The instituting words are thus made to govern the manner in which those cited by Jesus from chapter 1 are to be interpreted.

Also cited is Genesis 2:24, which Milton regards as spoken by Adam. Yet Milton's exegesis has already determined that Adam's speech too has meaning only with reference to the words of divine institution. In the first part of Adam's speech ("This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man," Gen. 2:23), Milton finds Adam referring to and expounding his maker's instituting words, regarded as constituting a promise now fulfilled (*T* 602). By establishing a dialogic relation between Adam's words and those of his maker, Milton can argue that anyone who thinks Adam is in these words formulating the doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage "in the meer flesh" is not only sadly mistaken but guilty of using "the mouth of our generall parent, the first time it opens, to an arrogant opposition, and correcting of Gods wiser ordinance" (*T* 603). It is the next part of Adam's speech, however, verse 24, which is commonly thought to be "the great knot tier," as Milton correctly points out: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." In Milton's view, *by* opening with "therefore," this verse clearly indicates that Adam confines the implications of his utterance only to "what God spake concerning the inward essence of Mariage in his institution" (*T* 603). With reference to both parts of Adam's speech, Milton's position thus is that the deity's words are the "soul" of Adam's and must be taken into Adam's utterance if it is properly to be understood.

This is not, interestingly, the reading given these verses by Calvin, who assigns verse 23 to Adam, but draws attention to the interpretative choices open with regard to 2:24, for which three different speakers are eligible: Adam, God, and Moses. After a brief discussion Calvin opts for Moses, suggesting that, having reported what had historically been done, Moses in this passage sets forth the end of God's ordinance, which is the permanence or virtual indissolvability of the marriage bond.[24] For reasons that are obvious, Milton would want to reject this reading. By making Adam the speaker of this passage, Milton weakens its authority as a text enjoining the indissolubility of marriage. Since this is the very text cited by Jesus in Matthew, such an assault on its status as injunction is a decisive defensive move. But it is also more than that. For by assuming Adam to be its speaker,

Milton also strengthens the contractual view of the first institution his exegetical practice implicitly but unmistakably develops.

That Milton's understanding of the first institution is implicitly both contractual and masculinist can perhaps be seen if his exegetical practice is compared with that of Rachel Speght. Towards the beginning of *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, Speght argues that Eve's goodness is proved by the manner of her creation:

> Thus the resplendent love of God toward man appeared, in taking care to provide him an helper before hee saw his owne want, and in providing him such an helper as should bee meete for him. Soveraignety had hee over all creatures, and they were all serviceable unto him; but yet afore woman was formed, there was not a meete helpe found for *Adam*. Mans worthinesse not meriting this great favour at Gods hands, but his mercie onely moving him thereunto: . . . that for mans sake, that hee might not be an unit, when all other creatures were for procreation duall, hee created woman to bee a solace unto him, to participate of his sorrowes, partake of his pleasures, and as a good yokefellow beare part of his burthen. Of the excellencies of this Structure, I meane of Women, whose foundation and original of creation, was Gods love, do I intend to dilate.[25]

Were Milton to have read Speght's tract, I suspect that midway through the first sentence here he would have discovered himself a resisting reader. The notion that God acted on Adam's behalf "before hee saw his own want" would have seemed highly provocative, if not downright offensive. Speght draws strategically on orthodox Protestantism's doctrinal emphasis on divine grace as radically transcendent, as an active principle utterly unconnected with human deserts. In the process, Adam becomes a passive recipient of a gift, meetness abounding, while Eve is subtly positioned in relation with her true "original," divine love.

By contrast, in the divorce tracts and, as we shall see, in *Paradise Lost* as well, Milton foregrounds an Adam whose innocent or legitimate desires pre-exist the creation of the object that will satisfy them. But this is to put it too abstractly. In Milton's exegesis, the significance of the gift – woman – passed from maker to man is determined by two speeches, first the maker's and then Adam's, precisely because these speeches are construed as a verbal exchange that is basically contractual. In Genesis 2:18 Adam's maker promises him that he will assuage his loneliness and provide him with a meet help; in 2:23 and 24, Adam accepts this gift by acknowledging it is exactly what was promised him, and then promises to honour it on these very grounds. Eve's status as a divinely bestowed gift is exploited polemically by both Speght and Milton. But unlike Speght's transcendent lord of love, Milton's veiled but systematic insistence on the contractual form of the first institution is produced by a Protestantism pressed into the

service of an historically specific form of individualism, an individualism paradigmatically masculine, autonomous, articulate, and preternaturally awake to the implications of entering into relations with others.[26]

IV

One of the questions concerning *Paradise Lost* that this discussion of the divorce tracts has, I hope, made it possible to address is: why does Milton's Eve tell the story of her earliest experiences first, in Book IV? Why, if Adam was formed first, then Eve, does Adam tell *his* story to Raphael *last*, in Book VIII? An adequate response to this question would require a full-scale analysis of the ways in which *Paradise Lost* articulates a putative sequential order of events or story with the narrative discourse that distributes this story. As a genre, epic is of course expected to develop complicated relations between a presumed chronological and a narrative ordering of events. But *Paradise Lost* would seem to use both retrospective and prospective narratives in a more systematic and motivated manner than does any of its predecessors, in part because it is so highly conscious of the problematical process of its consumption. I would like to argue here that *Paradise Lost*'s narrative distribution of Adam and Eve's first experiences is not just complexly but ideologically motivated, and that the import of this motivation can best be grasped by an analysis aware of the historically specific features of Milton's exegetical practice in the divorce tracts.

This practice is crucially important to *Paradise Lost*'s own use of the Genesis creation texts. In the case of the passage it most obviously informs, Raphael's account of the creation of "man" on the sixth day of creation in Book VII, certain features are intelligible only in the light of this historically specific context. If commenting on this passage at all, critics have tended to suggest that Raphael gives something like a heavenly, as compared with Adam's later more earthly, account of creation.[27] This doesn't, however, even begin to do justice to the intricately plotted relations of the "P" and "J" accounts in the following:

> Let us make now Man in our image, Man
> In our similitude, and let them rule
> Over the Fish and Fowl of Sea and Air,
> Beast of the Field, and over all the Earth,
> And every creeping thing that creeps the ground.
> This said, he form'd thee, *Adam*, thee O Man
> Dust of the ground, and in thy nostrils breath'd
> The breath of Life; in his own Image hee
> Created thee, in the Image of God
> Express, and thou becam'st a living Soul.
> Male he created thee, but thy consort

Female for Race; then bless'd Mankind, and said,
Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the Earth,
Subdue it, and throughout Dominion hold
Over Fish of the Sea, and Fowl of the Air,
And every living thing that moves on the Earth.
Wherever thus created, for no place
Is yet distinct by name, thence, as thou know'st
He brought thee into this delicious Grove,
This Garden, planted with the Trees of God,
Delectable both to behold and taste;
And freely all thir pleasant fruit for food
Gave thee, all sorts are here that all th' Earth yields,
Variety without end; but of the Tree
Which tasted works knowledge of Good and Evil,
Thou may'st not; in the day thou eat'st, thou di'st;
Death is the penalty impos'd, beware,
And govern well thy appetite, lest sin
Surprise thee, and her black attendant Death.
Here finish'd hee.

(VII.519–48)

Genesis 1:26–8 is here given in what is virtually its entirety. But the principal acts of Genesis 2:7–17 are also related: Yahweh's making of "Man" from the dust of the ground (2:7), his taking of this man into the garden of Eden (2:15), and his giving of the prohibition (2:16,17). One could argue that even Milton's "artistry" here hasn't received its proper due, since this splicing economically makes from two heterogeneous accounts a single one that is both intellectually and aesthetically coherent.

Yet it does more, far more, than this. For Raphael's account removes any trace of ambiguity – the residual generic dust, as it were – from the Priestly account of the creation of *hā'ādām* or "man" in the image of God. This it does by a set of speech-acts unambiguously identifying this "man" with Raphael's interlocutor, Adam. The direct address in "he form'd thee, *Adam*, thee O Man / Dust of the ground" has what amounts to a deictic function, joining the representative "Man" to Raphael's gendered and embodied listener, who is specifically and repeatedly addressed here, while Eve (though still an auditor) very pointedly is not. It is clearly significant that these very lines effect the joining of the Priestly and Yahwistic accounts. By placing "thee O Man / Dust of the ground" in apposition to the named "Adam," it is suggested that this individualized "Adam" actually *is hā'ādām* or representative man and the punning *hā'ādāmâ* "ground," an identity that only the joining of the two accounts reveals.

The impression this joining creates is that the two accounts have always already been one in narrating the creation of Adam. The same cannot be

said of Raphael's account of the creation of Eve, however. For in contrast (I would like to say something like "in striking contrast," yet it has not really been noticed) to the ingenious joining that takes place for the sake of Adam, Raphael refers to Eve's creation only in the statement immediately following, which is again, significantly, addressed to Adam: "Male he created thee, but thy consort / Female for Race" (529–30).[28] Outside of this meagre "but thy consort / Female for Race," Raphael's account does not otherwise even allude to the creation of Eve, although, as we have seen, other details of the narrative in the second chapter are included in it. Indeed, if we examine the matter more closely, it appears that the Yahwist account is made use of only up to and including Genesis 2:17 (the giving of the prohibition) precisely because Genesis 2:18 inaugurates the story of the creation of a help meet for Adam.

But of course the story of Eve's creation is not excised from *Paradise Lost* altogether, which is, presumably, why readers have not protested its absence here. It is told later, by another narrator, Adam. One of the effects of this narrative distribution is that in Milton's epic Adam's story comes to have exactly the same relation to Raphael's as in the divorce tracts and in Protestant commentaries the second chapter of Genesis has to the first: it is an exposition or commentary upon it, revealing its true import.[29] Yet the second telling can have this status only because it is Adam's. As my discussion indicates, Milton's argument in the divorce tracts rests on a radical privileging of "J" over "P" in the specific form of a privileging of the words of divine institution in Genesis 2:18. Had Milton interpolated the story of Eve's creation into Raphael's creation account, he would have had to record these words in the form of indirect speech (as he does the words of prohibition in lines 542–7) or else to have reproduced both the creator's speech and Adam's. In either case, the instituting words would have been displaced from their centres of authority. By transferring the entire narrative to Adam and by interpolating a dramatic colloquy into this narrative, *Paradise Lost* ensures the coincidence of narrator and auditor of the instituting words, of narrator and of the first man's instituting response. By dramatizing this commentary, this necessary supplement to Raphael's account, in the form of a colloquy narrated by Adam, *Paradise Lost* makes sure that the doctrine of marriage is both produced and understood by the person for whom it is ordained, just as in the divorce tracts it is the privileged male voice, Milton's, which expounds the true doctrine of divorce.

As the divorce tracts never tire of insisting, the true doctrine of marriage relates only to the satisfaction of that which the wanting soul needfully seeks. In *Paradise Lost* this doctrine is co-authored by Adam and the "Presence Divine," who work it out together. It is also communicated, formally, by the extraordinary emphasis placed on Adam's subjectivity, on his actual experience of desire. As Milton has masterminded the exchange,

the divine instituting words come *after* Adam has been got to express his longing for a fitting companion (VIII.444–51), so that this longing has the kind of priority that befits the first man. Yet the longing is also clearly a rational burning. With its strong filiations to the disputation, the very form of the colloquy establishes that this desire is rational, and that merely reproductive ends are certainly not what Adam has in mind. Although procreation is referred to, it is presented as a kind of necessary consequence of the conjunction of male and female, but for that very reason as a subordinate end. Adam's language cleverly associates it with a prior lack, a prior and psychological defect inherent in his being the first and only man (VIII.415–25). The way Milton's Adam responds to the deity's formal presentation to him of his bride, Eve, is just as motivated. The Genesis 2:23–4 speech is cited, but only after it has been introduced in a way that joins it explicitly to the causes implicit in the deity's instituting words:

> This turn hath made amends; thou hast fulfill'd
> Thy words, Creator bounteous and benign,
> Giver of all things fair, but fairest this
> Of all thy gifts, nor enviest. I now see
> Bone of my Bone, Flesh of my Flesh, my Self
> Before me; Woman is her Name, of Man
> Extracted; for this cause he shall forgo
> Father and Mother, and to his Wife adhere;
> And they shall be one Flesh, one Heart, one Soul.
> (VIII.491–9)

This speech is presented as a species of spontaneous lyrical utterance ("I overjoy'd could not forbear aloud" (490)) and according to Adam is "heard" by Eve. Yet it is obviously addressed *not* to her but to her maker, who is thanked for the gift itself, but not until he has been praised for having kept his word. Before letting Adam commit himself to the project of becoming one flesh with Eve, Milton has to make it clear that Adam does so believing that the "Heav'nly Maker" has done what he has promised, that is, created a truly fit help.

Not only the placement of Adam's narrative after Raphael's but also its most salient formal features can thus be seen to be motivated ideologically, and to illustrate the causes joining the divorce tracts and *Paradise Lost*. Before turning to Eve, I would like to summarize the discussion so far by emphasizing that these causes are joined, and to man's advantage, both when "P" and "J" are united and when they aren't. By joining "P" and "J" as it does, Raphael's account specifies the gendered Adam of *Paradise Lost* as the "man" who is made in the divine image. By disjoining them, Raphael's account lets Adam himself tell the story of the creature made to satisfy his desire for an other self.

We can now, more directly, take up the question, why does heaven's last

best gift tell her story first? One way of approach might be to suggest that had Eve's narrative of her earliest experiences appeared where "naturally," in the order of creation, it should have, that is *after* Adam's, *Paradise Lost* might have risked allowing her to appear as the necessary and hence in a certain sense superior creature suggested by what Jacques Derrida has called the logic of the supplement, undeniably set in motion by Adam's self-confessed "single imperfection." *Paradise Lost*'s narrative discourse would seem to want to subvert this logic by presenting Eve's narrative first. And it seems to want to subvert it further by placing immediately *after* Adam's narrative a confession in which Eve's completeness and superiority is made to seem an illusion to which Adam is, unaccountably, susceptible. In this part of Adam's dialogue with Raphael, the language of supplementarity as artificial exteriority seems curiously insistent: Eve has been given "Too much of Ornament" (VIII.538); she is "Made so adorn for thy delight the more" (VIII.576) and so on.

Yet a displaced form of the logic of supplementarity may nevertheless be at work in the place of priority given Eve's narrative. For if Eve is created to satisfy the psychological needs of a lonely Adam, then it is necessary that *Paradise Lost*'s readers experience her from the first as expressing an intimately subjective sense of self. From the start she must be associated in a distinctive manner with the very interiority that Adam's need for an other self articulates. Or to put this another way, Eve's subjectivity must be made available to the reader so that it can ground, as it were, the lonely Adam's articulated desire for another self. Appearing as it does in Book IV, Eve's narrative lacks any immediately discernible connection with the Genesis creation accounts on which the narratives of both Raphael and Adam draw. Its distance from Scripture as publicly acknowledged authority is matched by Eve the narrator's use of markedly lyrical, as opposed to disputational, forms. Set in juxtaposition to the rather barrenly disputational speech of Adam's which immediately precedes it in Book IV, Eve's narrative creates a space that is strongly if only implicitly gendered, a space that is dilatory, erotic, and significantly, almost quintessentially, "private."

In a recent essay, Christine Froula reads Eve's first speech thematically and semi-allegorically, as telling the story of Eve's (or woman's) submission of her own personal experience and autonomy to the voices (the deity's, then Adam's) of patriarchal authority. As the very title of her essay – "When Eve Reads Milton" – indicates, Froula wants to find in Milton's Eve if not a proto-feminist then a potential ally in contemporary academic feminism's struggle to interrogate the academic canon together with the cultural and political authority it represents. Milton's Eve can play the part of such an ally, however, only because for Froula the privacy of Eve's earliest experiences and the autonomy she thereby initially seems to possess are equivalent to a potentially empowering freedom from patriarchal rule.[30] Given the liberal assumptions of the feminism it espouses, Froula's

argument obviously does not want to submit the category of personal experience to ideological analysis.

In attempting to give it such an analysis, I would like to suggest that Eve's speech plays a pivotal role, historically and culturally, in the construction of the kind of female subjectivity required by a new economy's progressive sentimentalization of the private sphere.[31] It is possible to suggest this in part because the subjective experiences Eve relates are represented as having taken place before any knowledge of or commitment to Adam. That is, they are represented as taking place in a sphere that has the defining features of the "private" in an emerging capitalist economy: a sphere that appears to be autonomous and self-sustaining even though not "productive" and in so appearing is the very home of the subject. In Book VIII Adam recalls having virtually thought his creator into existence and having come up with the idea of Eve in a dialogue with his fellow patriarch. By contrast, Eve recalls inhabiting a space she believed to be uninhabited, autonomous, hers – but for the "Shape within the wat'ry gleam." It is, however, precisely because this belief is evidently *false* that it is possible to see this space as analogous to the "private" sphere, which is of course constituted by and interconnected with the "public" world outside it. Illusory as this autonomy is, inhabiting a world appearing to be her own would nevertheless seem to be the condition of the subjectivity Eve here reveals.

It has long been a commonplace of commentaries on *Paradise Lost* that a network of contrasts is articulated between Eve's narration of her earliest experiences and Adam's, the contrasts all illustrating the hierarchically ordered nature of their differences. Yet it has not been recognized clearly enough that while shadowing forth these bi-polar oppositions, Eve's narrative is supposed to rationalize the mutuality or intersubjective basis of their love. For by means of the Narcissus myth, *Paradise Lost* is able to represent her experiencing a desire equivalent or complementary to the lonely Adam's desire for an "other self." It is not hard to see that Adam's own desire for an other self has a strong "narcissistic" component. Yet Adam's retrospective narrative shows this narcissism being sparked, sanctioned and then satisfied by his creator. By contrast, though in Book IV Eve recalls experiencing a desire for an other self, this desire is clearly and unambiguously constituted by illusion, both in the sense of specular illusion and in the sense of error. Neo-Platonic readings of the Narcissus myth find in it a reflection of the "fall" of spirit into matter. Milton transforms this tragic tale into one with a comic resolution by instructing Eve in the superiority of spirit or, more exactly, in the superiority of "manly grace and wisdom" over her "beauty." But because this happily ending little *Bildungsroman* also involves a movement from illusion to reality, Eve is made to come to prefer not only "manly grace and wisdom" as attributes of Adam but also, and much more importantly, Adam as embodiment of the

reality principle itself: he whose image she really is, as opposed to the specular image in which her desire originated.

To become available for the mutuality the doctrine of wedded love requires, Eve's desire therefore must in effect lose its identity, while yet somehow offering itself up for correction and reorientation. As has often been noted, Eve's fate diverges from that of Narcissus at the moment when the divine voice intervenes to call her away from her delightful play with her reflection in the "waters." We have seen that in Book VIII Adam's desire for an other self is sanctioned by the divine presence's rendering of "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." When the divine voice speaks to Eve, it is to ask that she redirect the desire she too experiences for an other self:

> What thou seest,
> What there thou seest fair Creature is thyself,
> With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
> And I will bring thee where no shadow stays
> Thy coming, and thy soft imbraces, hee
> Whose image thou art, him thou shalt enjoy
> Inseparably thine.
>
> (IV.467–73)

Unlike the instituting words spoken to Adam in Book VIII, these have no basis in the Yahwist creation account. Yet they are clearly invented to accompany the only part of that account which Milton has to work with here, the brief "and brought her unto the man" (Gen. 2:22), which in Genesis immediately precedes Adam's words of recognition. Marked inescapably by literary invention and uttered by a presence that is invisible to Eve, the voice's words have a curiously secondary or derivative status, at least compared with those spoken to Adam. They seem indeed, fittingly, to be a kind of echo of the divine voice.

In so far as it effects a separation of Eve from her physical image, this word in a way echoes what Milton calls the creator's originary "divorcing command" by which "the world first rose out of Chaos" (*DDD* 273). But the separation of Eve from her image is not the only divorce effected here. Before this intervention the "Smooth Lake" into which Eve peers seems to her "another Sky," as if the waters on the face of the earth and the heavens were for her indistinguishable or continuous. The divine voice could therefore much more precisely be said to recapitulate or echo the paternal Word's original division of the waters from the waters in Genesis 1:6–7. Before describing her watery mirror and her other self, Eve mentions "a murmuring sound / Of waters issu'd from a Cave" – murmurs, waters and cave all being associated symbolically with maternality, as critics have pointed out. When the paternal Word intervenes, Eve's specular auto-

eroticism seems to become, paradoxically, even more her own, in part because it no longer simply reflects that of Ovid's Narcissus. And when Eve responds to the verbal intervention by rejecting not only his advice but also Adam, "hee / Whose image" she is, preferring the "smooth wat'ry image," an analogical relationship gets established between female auto-eroticism and the mother–daughter dyad. But – and the difference is of crucial importance – this implicit and mere analogy is based on specular reflection and error alone. Grounded in illusion, Eve's desire for an other self is therefore throughout appropriated by a patriarchal order, with the result that in *Paradise Lost*'s recasting of Ovid's tale of Narcissus, Eve's illusion is not only permitted but destined to pass away. In its very choice of subject, Milton's epic seems to testify to the progressive privatization and sentimentalization of the domestic sphere. That this privatization and sentimentalization make possible the construction of a novel female subjectivity is nowhere clearer than in Eve's first speech, in which the divine voice echoes the words originally dividing the waters from the waters, words which in their derived context separate Eve from the self which is only falsely, illusorily either mother or other.

This takes us to the very last feature of Eve's story-telling to be considered here. As has been suggested, Protestant exegetes consider Adam's declaration in Genesis 2:24, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," to be part of the first wedding ceremony. A version of this ceremonial utterance appears in Adam's narrative and (highly abridged) in Eve's. In Genesis, this declaration follows "and brought her unto the man," a verse which is translated into action in both of *Paradise Lost*'s accounts. Calvin, when commenting on this phrase, views the action from Adam's point of view, as involving the exchange of a gift: "For seeing Adam tooke not a wife to him selfe at his owne will: but tooke her whome the Lord offered and appointed unto him: hereof the holinesse of matrimonie doeth the better appeare, because we know that God is the author thereof."[32] Yet Milton is not alone in seeing this moment from Eve's point of view as well as from Adam's, for Diodati, commenting on "And brought her unto him," says: "As a mediator, to cause her voluntarily to espouse her self to Adam and to confirm and sanctify that conjunction."[33] In *Paradise Lost*, the story Eve tells stresses with remarkable persistence both the difficulty and the importance of Eve's "voluntarily" espousing herself to Adam. Many years ago Cleanth Brooks mentioned that Eve's speech in Book IV seemed to anticipate Freud's observations on the comparative difficulty the female has in the transition to adult heterosexuality.[34] But if it does so, it is in a context that constitutes female desire so as to situate the process of transition within competing representational media, within what is almost a kind of hall of voices and mirrors.

This entire discussion of the relation between *Paradise Lost*'s retrospective creation narratives and the divorce tracts can therefore be put in the

following, summary terms. If in Book VIII's recollected colloquy Adam is revealed articulating the doctrine of marriage, in Book IV's recollected self-mirroring Eve is portrayed enacting its discipline. Or to formulate this somewhat differently, by associating Eve with the vicissitudes of courtship and marriage, and by emphasizing her voluntary submission both to the paternal voice and to her "author" and bridegroom, Adam, *Paradise Lost* can *first* present the practice for which Adam *then*, at the epic's leisure, supplies the theory. In doing so, *Paradise Lost* manages to establish a paradigm for the heroines of the genre Milton's epic is said to usher in. In the Yahwist's creation account, Adam may have been formed first, then Eve. But Milton's Eve tells her story first because the domestic sphere with which her subjectivity associates itself will soon be in need of novels whose heroines are represented learning, in struggles whose conclusions are almost always implicit in the way they begin, the value of submitting desire to the paternal law.

Of course the female authors and readers associated with the rise of the novel are not always willing to submit to this discipline. And in what is perhaps the most strongly argued critique of the institution of marriage to be written by a feminist before this century, "Milton" is prominently associated with the very ideological contradictions that get exposed. In *Reflections upon Marriage*, Mary Astell submits the notion of "subjection" to an analysis that is devastatingly sharp and in certain ways deconstructive, since she wants to undo the notion that subjection is synonymous with "natural" inferiority. Arguing, even if with heavy irony, by means of the very rationalist and individualist principles that came to prevail during the Civil War period, Astell urges women who are considering marriage to become fully conscious of the liberties they will have to surrender if they are to enter into this state of institutionalized domestic subjection. Her wry reference to Milton is fairly well-known: "For whatever may be said against Passive-Obedience in another case, I suppose there's no Man but likes it very well in this; how much soever Arbitrary Power may be dislik'd on a Throne, not *Milton* himself wou'd cry up Liberty to poor *Female Slaves*, or plead for the Lawfulness of Resisting a Private Tyranny."[35]

As I have suggested, the appearance, at least, of Active-Obedience is far more important to *Paradise Lost* and to Milton's rationalism than this remark would suggest. Might an awareness of this be registered in Astell's reflections on Genesis in the supplementary "Preface"? Like other feminists writing from within the Christian tradition, Astell finds 1 Timothy 2:11–14, with its unambiguous assertion of the Genesis Adam's priority over Eve, exceedingly troublesome: she offers a rather laboured allegorical interpretation, and then adds the caveat that if the "Learned" don't accept it, it will be because "Learning is what Men have engros'd to themselves."[36] Though less defensive, her remarks on Genesis itself are no less acerbic. After mentioning, approvingly though tentatively, the opinion that "in the

Original State of things the Woman was the Superior," Astell proceeds to this brilliantly savage rebuttal of the notion of woman's "inferior" secondariness:

> However this be, 'tis certainly no Arrogance in a Woman to conclude, that she was made for the Service of GOD, and that this is her End. Because GOD made all things for Himself, and a Rational Mind is too noble a Being to be Made for the Sake and Service of any Creature. The Service she at any time becomes oblig'd to pay to a Man, is only a Business by the Bye. Just as it may be any Man's Business and Duty to keep Hogs; he was not made for this, but if he hire himself out to such an Employment, he ought conscientiously to perform it.[37]

Like other feminist commentators, from participants in the "Querelle des Femmes" to Phyllis Trible and Mieke Bal, Astell here implicitly privileges "P" over "J." In overturning the view that woman was created "for" man, Astell, however, applies to the domestic sphere the historically determinate notion of contractual relations that Milton helps to articulate in his divorce tracts, political treatises and in *Paradise Lost*. With dazzling, Circe-like powers, Astell's analogy works to disabuse bourgeois "Man" of his delusions of grandeur. But in exploiting, however archly, a contractual notion of "Service," it also illustrates some of the hazards involved in the project – ongoing – of trying to call a spade a spade.

Notes

1. For this, see Barbara K. Lewalski, "Milton and women – yet once more" (*Milton Studies*, 6, 1974, 8). Other defenses have been written by Virginia R. Mollenkott, "Milton and women's liberation: a note on teaching method" (*Milton Quarterly*, 7, 1973, 99–102); Joan M. Webber, "The politics of poetry: feminism and *Paradise Lost*" (*Milton Studies*, 14, 1980, 3–24) and Diane K. McColley, *Milton's Eve* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1983). Generally speaking, an apologetic tendency is a feature of much North American academic literature on Milton.
2. Quotations from Milton's poetry are from *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, Odyssey, 1957).
3. Biblical quotations are from the King James version.
4. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1978), 100–1. The discussion in chs 1 and 4 of this work revises and extends the influential "Depatriarchalizing in biblical interpretation" (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 16, 1973, 30–48). For a fuller discussion of some of the exegetical issues touched upon here, see an earlier version of this essay, "Genesis, genesis, exegesis, and the formation of Milton's Eve," in *Cannibals, Witches and Divorce: Estranging the Renaissance*, ed. Marjorie Garber (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1987), 147–208. The present essay is part of a full-length study on Genesis, gender, discourse and Milton to be published by Cornell University Press and by Methuen.
5. Mieke Bal, "Sexuality, sin, and sorrow: the emergence of the female character (a reading of Genesis 1–3)" (*Poetics Today*, 6, 1985, 21–42).

6. *Tetrachordon*, ed. Arnold Williams, in vol. II of *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Ernest Sirluck (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1959), 594. Subsequent references to this edition of *Tetrachordon* will appear parenthetically introduced by "*T.*" See David Paraeus, *In Genesin Mosis Commentarius* (Frankfurt, 1609), 267, 293.
7. John Calvin, *A Commentarie of John Calvine, upon the first booke of Moses called Genesis*, tr. Thomas Tymme (London, 1578), 47.
8. Margo Todd argues persuasively for the importance of relating Protestant to humanist views in "Humanists, Puritans and the spiritualized household" (*Church History*, 49, 1980, 18–34). For a discussion of the distinctively Puritan development of this ideology see William and Malleville Haller, "The Puritan art of love" (*Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 5, 1942, 235–72); William Haller, "Hail Wedded Love" (*English Literary History*, 13, 1946, 79–97); see also John Halkett, *Milton and the Idea of Matrimony: A Study of the Divorce Tracts and "Paradise Lost"* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970), and James T. Johnson, *A Society Ordained by God: English Puritan Marriage Doctrine in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1970). For a negative evaluation of the impact on women of the development of bourgeois marriage doctrine, see Linda T. Fitz, "'What says the married woman?:' marriage theory and feminism in the English Renaissance" (*Mosaic* 13, Winter) 1980, 1–22. For a wide-ranging, comparatist discussion of these socio-economic and ideological changes as they affect the relations of the sexes, see the introduction to *Rewriting the Renaissance*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xv-xxxi.
9. Calvin, op. cit., 74. Latin cited from *Mosis Libri V, cum Johannis Calvini Commentariis* (Geneva, 1563), 19.
10. The political, legal and social contexts for Milton's tracts are discussed by Chilton L. Powell in *English Domestic Relations, 1487–1653* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1917), 61–100, and by Ernest Sirluck (ed.), vol. II of *Complete Prose Works*, 137–58. Milton's rhetorical strategies are examined by Keith W. Stavely, *The Politics of Milton's Prose Style* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1975), 54–72, and by John M. Perlette, "Milton, Ascham, and the rhetoric of the divorce controversy" (*Milton Studies*, 10, 1977, 195–215). A relevant and illuminating study of the "crossing" of rhetorical, judicial and other discursive codes can be found in Pat Parker's "Shakespeare and rhetoric: 'dilation' and 'delation,'" in *Othello, Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (London, Methuen, 1985), 54–74.
11. For a discussion of the title, see the preface by Arnold Williams, *Tetrachordon*, 571.
12. *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, ed. Lowell W. Coolidge, vol. II of *Complete Prose Works*, 240. Further references will be introduced by "*DDD.*"
13. Calvin, op. cit., 72; *Mosis Libri V*, 18.
14. Rachel Speght, *A Mouzell for Melastomus, the cynicall bayter of, and foule mouthed barker against Evahs sex* (London, 1617), 6, 14, 16. Joseph Swetnam, *The Araignment of lewd, idle, forward, and unconstant women* (London, 1615). For further discussion of this controversy, see Coryl Crandall, *Swetnam the Woman-Hater: The Controversy and the Play* (Lafayette, Purdue University Studies, 1969), and Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540–1620* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1984). The "Querelle des Femmes" has recently been studied by Joan Kelley, *Women, History and Theory* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984), 65–109. See also Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of*

Woman (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980), as well as the discussion of "feminist polemic" in *First Feminists: British Women Writers, 1578–1799*, ed. Moira Ferguson (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985), 27–32.

15. Joan Sharpe, chapter VIII of *Ester Hath Hang'd Haman: A Defense of Women, Against The Author of the Arraignment of Women* by Ester Sowernam, reprinted in *First Feminists*, 81.
16. Speght, op. cit., 4, 5.
17. ibid., 11.
18. ibid., 14.
19. Alexander Niccholes, *A Discourse, of Marriage and Wiving: and of the greatest Mystery therein Contained: How to Choose a good Wife from a bad . . .* (London, 1615), 5.
20. ibid., 2.
21. See the influential discussion by Keith Thomas, "Women and the Civil War sects" (*Past and Present*, 13, 1958, 42–62). Phyllis Mack examines some female prophets and the ways in which their activities were "limited by traditional beliefs about woman's passivity, her low social position, and her basic irrationality," in "Women as prophets during the English Civil War" (*Feminist Studies*, 8, 1, 1982, 25). For a discussion of more overtly political interventions, see Patricia Higgins, "The reactions of women, with special reference to women petitioners," in *Politics, Religion and the English Civil War*, ed. Brian Stuart Manning (London, Edward Arnold, 1973), 177–222.
22. *Annotations Upon All the Books of the Old and New Testaments . . . By the Joynt-Labour of Certain Divines . . .* (London, 1645). For its insistence on the generic sense of Genesis "Man," the *Annotations* would seem to be indebted to the text ordered by the Synod of Dort and published in 1637, later translated as *The Dutch Annotations Upon the Whole Bible . . .*, tr. Theodore Haak (London, 1657).
23. *Colasterion*, ed. Lowell W. Coolidge, vol. 2 of *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 739–40.
24. Calvin, op. cit., 77–8.
25. Speght, op. cit., 2, 3.
26. Catherine Belsey examines the development and representation of liberal-humanist "Man" in *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London, Methuen, 1985). Francis Barker suggestively locates in the seventeenth century the emergence of a distinctively bourgeois subjectivity; see *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays in Subjection* (London, Methuen, 1984). Jean Bethke Elshtain critiques the rise of liberal ideology in *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981), 100–46. For a discussion of the divorce tracts that sees them expressing an alienated bourgeois individualism, see David Aers and Bob Hodge in their very important "'Rational burning:' Milton on sex and marriage" (*Milton Studies*, 12, 1979, 3–33).
27. J. M. Evans, *"Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition* (London, Oxford University Press, 1968), 256.
28. If commented upon at all, the emphasis on procreation here is naturalized so that it becomes an expression of Raphael's character or situation. Aers annotates these lines by suggesting that Raphael is revealing a typically "distorted view of sexuality," *John Milton, "Paradise Lost:" Book VII-VIII*, ed. David Aers and Mary Ann Radzinowicz, *Cambridge Milton for Schools and Colleges*, ed. J. B. Broadbent (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974), 99. Halkett (op. cit., iii) points out that Raphael later (VIII.229–46) reveals that

he was not present the day of Eve's creation. But since both are supposed to take place on the same "Day," Raphael's absence obviously cannot explain the different treatment given Adam's creation and Eve's in his account. I would argue that such character- and situation-related effects are part and parcel of the ideologically motivated narrative distributions examined here.

29. In emphasizing the lines of continuity between the divorce tracts and *Paradise Lost*, I am questioning the position developed by Aers and Hodge, who see *Paradise Lost* gesturing towards "a more adequate view of sexuality and the relationship between women and men" (op. cit., 4). Like other readers, Aers and Hodge stress the importance of the following speech, suggesting that in it "Adam makes the equation Milton did not make in his prose works, the crucial equation between mutuality, equality, and delight" (23):

> Among unequals what society
> Can sort, what harmony or true delight?
> Which must be mutual, in proportion due
> Giv'n and receiv'd. (VIII. 383–6)

In my view, however, this produces a mystifying view of "equality," since what Adam is here rejecting is the society of creatures belonging to a different species; Eve is "equal" only in the restricted sense of being a member of the human species. Although I do not here explore the various tensions and contradictions of Milton's views on gender relations in *Paradise Lost*, I make an attempt to do so in "Fallen differences, phallogocentric discourses: losing *Paradise Lost* to history," in *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History*, ed. Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987).

30. Christine Froula, "When Eve reads Milton: undoing the canonical economy" (*Critical Inquiry*, 10, 1983, 321–47). That Derrida's *Supplement* can productively expose motivated contradictions in the not unrelated field of Renaissance rhetorical theory is demonstrated by Derek Attridge in "Puttenham's perplexity: nature, art and the supplément in Renaissance poetic theory," in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 257–79.
31. For a sharp analysis of the ways in which, among the upper classes, the development of an affective domestic sphere served to reinforce masculinist modes of thought, see Susan Moller Okin, "Women and the making of the sentimental family" (*Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 11, 1981, 65–88).
32. Calvin, op. cit., 76–7.
33. Annotation on Genesis 2:22 in John Diodati, *Pious and Learned Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, tr. (R.G.), 3rd edn (London, 1651).
34. Cleanth Brooks, "Eve's awakening," in *Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry* (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 1954), 283–5. Brooks says that to the student of Freud, Eve's psychology may seem "preternaturally" convincing; he also remarks that Eve is "charmingly feminine withal"!
35. Mary Astell, *Reflections upon Marriage, The Third Edition, To Which is Added A Preface, in Answer to some Objections* (London, 1706), 27. Ruth Perry examines this work's political discourse in her recent biography, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986), 157–70. See also Joan K. Kinnaird, "Mary Astell and the conservative contribution to English feminism" (*Journal of British Studies*, 19, 1979, 53–75); and see the discussion by Hilda Smith, *Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1982), 131–9.
36. Astell, op. cit., Preface, a2, a3.
37. ibid., A2.