

John Milton's Androgynous Vision in *Paradise Lost*

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In Hebrew mythology, there is a story about Adam's first wife, whose name is not Eve, but Lilith. She is almost a counterpart to Eve, and also a proto-Eve. However, unlike Eve, she was created not from Adam's rib with a "crooked nature" (*Paradise Lost* IX; 885),¹⁾ but from the dust just as Adam was. Therefore, she believed she was just as equal as her partner, Adam. When he insisted on taking a ministering position over her and forced her submission in their marital bed, she felt threatened by his patriarchal power and fled from him to the edge of the Red Sea to reside with demons. This Lilith story shows the plausible possibility that an equal creation myth of the two sexes does exist. Yet, this legend also carries the distortion and deformation of equality by condemning Lilith to live her life with demons. It is interesting how Adam and Eve's unequal creation story has become the most pervasive substitute for the Lilith legend, passing from generation to generation with a good deal of credibility.

In this sense, the history of the oppression of women began long before the history of the patriarchal system, the underlying political base of our society. In order to maintain society's ideological paradigm, it was necessary for the ruling class to create a religion that would be most supportive to its ideology. In this respect, we can see the Bible as a creative product of political demand as well as the humanistic desire to provide a story about the origin of human beings. Without combining this human need with politics, it would not have been possible for the Bible to achieve the enormous support of generations throughout its history. Therefore, the history of the Bible and its hermeneutic tradition governs the whole cultural history of the Western world.

1) All quotations of Milton's *Paradise Lost* are from *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, Merritt Y. Hughes ed. New York: Macmillan, 1957.

In 1674, when John Milton published his revised second edition of *Paradise Lost*, it was a period when Christianity was integral to the existing patriarchal cultural tradition. Therefore, this patriarchal and its product/text have subordinated, imprisoned, and suppressed women in an unconscious way, if not a conscious one. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which inherited the patriarchal tradition, includes a considerable amount of stereotypical images of the subordinated woman. Thus, if we understand Milton's attitude toward women only through its literally overt message, we may say that he manipulated the image of woman by the process of presenting, disguising, and reinforcing his inventive and imaginative female virtues, such as submissiveness, subjectiveness, subordination, obsequiousness, and total obedience. Before we reach this point, however, we should carefully consider the literary tradition Milton inherited when he chose to rewrite the Bible story in *Paradise Lost*; for if Milton simply inherits and endorses the authoritative biblical tradition, why did he feel the need to revise and rewrite the Bible?

In this paper, I will use the Neo-Platonic idea of androgynous vision in order to discuss Milton's idea about woman, as reflected in his masterpiece, *Paradise Lost* (1674). The women issue in Milton's writing has led to a very controversial critical debate between various feminist readings, especially during last three decades. On the one hand, Milton has been treated as a stereotypical misogynist throughout the 1970's, culminating with Sandra Gilbert's convincing and illuminating book, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). The late 1980's feminists, on the other hand, see Milton's writing from a different angle, and begin even to call him "Feminist Milton" (Wittreich ix). In what sense Milton can be called both a misogynist and a feminist at the same time will be discussed first. Since this issue can not be discussed separate from Milton's political stance, I will also consider Milton's conception of an ideal woman and the ideal relationship between man and woman. In order to examine Milton's idea of woman as represented mainly by his literary treatment of Eve, I want to look closely at Milton's recurring emphasis of an androgynous vision through which he evaluates and liberates woman-kind from patriarchal doctrine. With this study, I hope to re-shape and re-emancipate Milton's true image of Eve which, I believe, has been distorted and

deformed by both feminists and male-oriented interpretations and misreadings.

The first wave of feminist criticism on Milton points out that his shaping of female imagery and characterization in *Paradise Lost* justifies his own patriarchal argument. By concretely visualizing the ideal relationship between man and woman, Milton provides an imaginary relationship of individuals to whatever their real conditions of existence is. Modern readers, who read Milton's *Paradise Lost* in a gender-conscious way, can scarcely be unaware of Milton's patriarchal rendering of the Adam and Eve story:

For nothing lovelier can be found
In woman, than to study household good,
And good works in her husband to promote.
(IX; 232-4)

This is, of course, perfectly orthodox in the seventeenth century and interestingly, still believed by many men and women. Sandra Gilbert asserts that *Paradise Lost* "must have seemed even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to illustrate the historical disposition and degradation of the female principle" (1978: 374).

Indeed, Milton provides the patriarchal paradigm of how women, who are educated into deference and obedience, willingly submit to the "wisdom" of the benevolent father who is a guardian for the morality of patriarchal culture, and how, in the process, women "often take on the father's contemptuous devaluation of and contemptuous attitude for the mother and for women as a group" (Flax 281). Most contemporary, anti-Miltonic feminist critics go one step further to consider that this representation is, in no doubt, patriarchal usurpation over the female literary imagination, evident especially when the subjective woman happens to be a writer. Milton is always there in the background as a literary father engendering "a dynamics of dependence, as well as the subversion of the independent self" by snaring woman into the "patriarchal literary tradition" and, thus, making her accept a place "in a literary heritage that is not her own and does not express her interests"

(Kowlaski-Wallace 277;284). Thus, a woman writer's self-contemplation, authored by male God and engendered by a godlike male, begins with a searching glance into the mirror of "the male-inscribed literary text" (Gilbert 15). Unfortunately, what she sees in the mirror is an unbearably distorted and deformed image, which is defined by the other sex and not by their own. How distorted and deformed is her identity? As Milton describes with his brilliant visual imagination, she is portrayed as a horrible reptile-like being, with little or no human qualities at all.

In this respect, Milton cannot escape from feminists' severe accusations of his prefiguration of woman-kind through Satanic genealogy, such as Satan's daughter, Sin, who even before the first woman Eve was created and named:

The one [Sin] seem'd Woman to the waist, and fair,
 But ended foul in many a scaly fold
 Voluminous and vast, a Serpent arm'd
 With mortal sting:
 (II; 650-3: Bracket added)

Just as Eve is a secondary and contingent creation from Adam's crooked rib, so is Sin from the fallen angel's brain, strongly reminiscent of the creation of Minerva from the head of Zeus (Hughes 250n). In a patriarchal Christian context, the pagan goddess Wisdom becomes, as Milton depicts, an abominable demoness, Sin, who carries the mirror image of all woman-kind. Therefore, Eve, Sin's double figure, is inevitably called as a "fair defect/ Of Nature" (X; 892-3). Even before Eve's fall, Sin pre-performs her analogous disobedience of opening the gates of hell to let the first cause of evil loose into the world. Like Eve and Satan, Sin wants to be one of the "Gods" reigning in a "new world of light and bliss" (II; 867). Just like Eve, she pledges Satan with allegiance and shows her obsequiousness and obedience: "Thou art my Father, thou my Author, thou/ My being gav'st me; whom should I obey/ But thee, whom follow?" (II; 864-6). Obviously Milton represents Sin as a prefigured and prefixed image of woman, a step toward the creation of Eve. Since Sin's relation with Satan and Death formulates almost the same kind of

Shakespearean subplotizing in a drama,²⁾ we are not surprized at Adam's later association of Eve with one of the reptile-kind, by angrily calling her, "Thou Serpent" (X; 867). Critics, like Gilbert, points out that Milton's allegorization of Sin clearly foreshadows Eve's image and speech, which he deliberately designs to "undercut even Eve's 'goodness' in advance" (Gilbert 198). Similar perspective is suggested by William Empson. He illustrates closely how Eve is portrayed as "the forbidden tree" from her first appearance:

She as a veil down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets wav'd
As the Wine 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; 304-11)

Eve has curly hair, modest but "requiring," that clutches at Adam like the tendrils of vine (Empson 176).³⁾ Another bitter observation on Milton's treatment of woman is in Northrop Frye's discussion of Blake's view of Milton. Frye asserts that Milton never sees beyond the sinister aspect of "female will," and that his vision of woman takes in "only the hostility and fear which it is quite right to assume toward the temptress ... but which is by no means the only way in which women can be visualized" (Frye 352).

Although some readers may miss what Empson and Frye see in Milton's

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- 2) The negative trinity of Satan, Sin, and Death parodies the Holy Trinity of God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost. In *Paradise Lost*, while Adam seems to participate in the patriarchal trinity along with God and Christ, Eve seems unsettled as to where she fits in.
 - 3) Empson delves more deeply into the metaphorical level. He adds: "the whole face of Hell has become identical with her face; it is filled, as by the mockery of the temptress, with her hair that entangled him; all the beauty of nature, through her, is a covering, like hers, for moral deformity. But at last now we have exposed her; her hair is corpse worms; she is the bitter apple of her own crime, kind of Eumenides."

metaphoric characterization of Eve from the above quoted passage, one could never overlook how Milton's first introduction of Eve includes her submissive quality inseparably followed by her distinctive sexuality. Eve's sexual beauty, as described by Milton, directly implies her "Subjection" with helpless sway, and she yields and yields again to her assumed superior, Adam. The moment Eve sees Adam, although she considers him "less fair/ Less winning soft, less amiably mild/ Than that smooth wat'ry image [herself]" (IV; 478-80: Bracket added), she shows her instinctively subservient nature by yielding again:

with that thy gentle hand
Seiz'd mine, I yielded, and from that time see
How beauty is excell'd by manly grace
And wisdom, which alone is truly fair.
(IV; 488-91)

Like Satan, Eve was born to suffer from her predestined inferiority. She reiterates her nature of being in a docile way:

My Author and Disposer, what thou bidd'st
Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains,
God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise.
(IV; 635-38)

In this passage, patriarchal Milton has Eve speak to Adam about her own understanding of what kind of subjection she must accommodate herself with. The essential need of Eve's "unargu'd" obedience in her relationship with Adam mirrors both Adam's obedience in his relationship with the divine angels, such as Raphael and Michael, and also the angels' obedience in their relationship with the ultimate God.⁴⁾ These paralleling relationships enable us

4) This concept of "structural parallelism" has been often applied to explain these mirroring relationships. In *"Paradise Lost" as "Myth"* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), Isabel G. MacCarffrey remarks on such parallelisms by using the concept of "retrospection and anticipation." Kathleen M. Swaim also shows how this concept of parallelism is

to comprehend the designed pattern of the thematic relations: Adam's relation to Eve not only parallels, but also justifies, God's relation to Man. Christopher Hill states the relationship between Adam and Eve is "not just a marriage; it can also at any time be an analogy for the political relationship, or the relationship of Christ to his church" (Hill 376). Milton's emphasis of the obedient virtue of womankind is an exemplar of the hierarchy between the sexes, the divine hierarchy of religion, and the authoritative hierarchy of politics. Just as Eve shows her obedient and subservient nature to Adam's unarguable superiority, each individual must show the same degree of obedience toward their superiors who are loftier beings in both religious and political sense.

In other words, obedience is the "unargu'd" prerequisite condition in "the Chain of Being."⁵ This ladder-like chain of being has "the obvious chasm between men and even the lowest of the angels" (Tillyard 24). Therefore, this predestinated hierarchical order governs all the relationships between the characters in *Paradise Lost*. Adam and Eve are able to reach God only through prayer, and God reaches Adam and Eve only through dream visions and the divine angels, since they are not allow to communicate directly with God. Thus, God sends forth Raphael to instruct Adam in Eden. Tillyard comments on this scene that "with superb cunning Milton calls Raphael "the winged Hierarch," to summon up in a word the associations of "degree"" (Tillyard 50). God's celestial discourse to man is performed only through his heavenly messenger, not directly by God himself. More importantly, since this celestial discourse is held exclusively between Raphael, "the winged Hierarchy" (V;468), "the Empyrean Minister" (V; 460), and "Inhabitant with God" (V; 461), and Adam, who the "one Almighty" (V; 469) and "the Patriarch of mankind" (V; 505),⁶ Eve cannot possibly take part in this heavenly discourse at all.

essentially coherent to the work's textual foundation in her essay, "'Hee for God Only, Shee for God in him": Structural Parallelism in *Paradise Lost*."

- 5) "The Great Chain of Being" is an important ontological concept, fully discussed in Arthur Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*, and in E.M.W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture*. Here, I borrow the term from Tillyard's chapters 4 and 5, "The Chain of Being" and "The Links in the Chain," respectively (pp. 23-76).
- 6) Interestingly enough, Milton calls Raphael and Adam those authoritative names,

Interestingly, much later on, when Raphael departs from Adam, Milton describes Eve's almost pre-determined earlier retreat with considerable tactfulness:

Yet went she not, as not with such discourse
 Delighted, or not capable her ear
 Of what was high: *such pleasure she reserv'd.*
 Adam relating, she sole Auditress;
 Her Husband the Relater she prefer'd
 Before the Angel, and of him to ask
 Chose rather: hee, she knew, would intermix
 Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute
 With conjugal Caresses, from his Lip
 Not Words alone pleas'd her.
 (VIII; 48-56 Italics added)

Here, Milton explores an invaluable aspect of the relation between Adam and Eve. That is, Eve, represented as a "sole Auditress," is circumscribed to be incapable to hear anything other than what Adam tells her, regardless of its reliability. It is quite ambiguous whether Milton means Eve's incapability is founded in her intelligence or is due to her hierarchically lower stature. Consequently, excluded from Raphael's lecture, Eve is unable to communicate with the failed angel Satan, without his metamorphosis into a lower creature, such as a serpent.

Milton never believed Adam and Eve were equals. On the contrary, he is always aware that they are, in a biblical context, created differently and endowed with different gifts. By describing Eve's character, surprisingly accustomed to being obedient and undrestanding of her subjection from the very beginning of her creation, Milton validates the vertically designed hierarchical order through their innate difference. When Satan sees his first glimpse of Adam and Eve, he assumes a greater physical, spiritual, and moral equality than Eve is actually considered to have; nonetheless, his initial

while he excludes Eve from their discourse. Milton, therefore, seems to be quite conscious of his casting her out.

observation ends with the lines that have perhaps most offended gender-oriented women reader:

Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
Godlike erect, with native Honor clad
In naked majesty seem'd Lords of all,
And worthy seem'd, for in their looks Divine
The image of their glorious Maker shone,
Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure,
Severe but in true filial freedom plac't;
*Whence true authority in men; though both
Not equal, as their sex not equal seem'd;
For contemplation hee and valor form'd.,
For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace,
Hee for God only, shee for God in him:*
(IV; 288-99 Italics added)

Both are "Lords of all," full of divine attributes, and placed in filial freedom. Eve is even included in "true authority," though the qualification which follows reserves greater authority to Adam. Milton attributes dominion, the divine attribute women were thought to lack, less to Eve and more to Adam, though later he shows the animals of Eden "duteous at her call" (IX; 521).

Milton no doubt accepts the hierarchical order and places woman in the natural inferiority. Milton's literary treatment of women, however, reaches a more complicated point. Most importantly, despite his inheritance of the natural hierarchy of the patriarchal culture and his endorsement of Eve's inferiority to Adam's superiority, Milton restructures the vertical hierarchical order into a harmonious one, or rather, a harmonious union. In other words, it should not be overlooked that Milton reshapes and revisions the Christian conceptualization of woman and its biblical source, as recent critics do now to three-hundred-year-old Milton in their criticism. Thus, we are in great need of recognizing and appreciating the complexity of the idea of woman as it takes shape in the mind and work of Milton.

Milton once intended to rewrite the old legend of King Arthur, a story in

which few woman character plays a major role. It is apparent that he abandoned the story that features one-man rule, a monarchical society, and sex roles so stereotyped that their validity had already been challenged in poetry that Milton knew well. Thus, in Milton's handling, the form and content of the biblical epic are layered with complexities and implications that exploit and overturn their traditions, yet at the same time orient and enlighten the reader. According to Hill, as a rewriting the Bible in the late seventeenth century, *Paradise Lost* had to satisfy orthodoxy or fall under censorship.⁷⁾ In other words, what Milton really intended to express must have been disguised by what his own contemporary political and social situation demanded of him. In the same context, Joan Malory Webber considers *Paradise Lost* takes "every advantage of its complex tradition's capacity to appear to be doing one thing while actually achieving something else" (7). In this sense, recent Milton critics find the enabling loophole through which Milton can be saved from anti-Miltonists' accusations of him as both a misogynist and a patriarch. It is true that Milton, as Gilbert notes, summarizes the patriarchal literary tradition in face value in *Paradise Lost*. However, Milton, by emphasizing the external authority of the Bible, always supports the inner promptings of the human spirit and the Puritan idea that the individual conscience is more trustworthy than any reigning monarch. In this respect, Milton's political faith and intention are obviously reflected in *Paradise Lost*. The revolutionary poet, at the time of the failure of the revolution, emphasizes the necessary spiritual shift in every individual. He accentuates that the true heroism requires solitary patience and martyrdom, and that no reigning monarch, no one leader or party can be trusted except the just, self-knowing solitary, as shown in the individual Abdiel's heroic confrontation against multitudinous evil.

Certainly, this conviction appeals to men and women who consider themselves victimized from their society culturally and/or politically. It contains suggestive, enlightening meaning, especially to women who have been unarguably yielding, excluded, isolated and discriminated. In this sense,

7) On the problem of censorship, Christopher Hill comments substantially in *Milton and the English Revolution*, chapter 29, "Paradise Lost."

we may well consider *Paradise Lost*, with considerable hyperbole, Milton's "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," the feminist tract of the late seventeenth century English Revolution period. Interestingly enough, despite Samuel Johnson's statement that Milton had "something like a Turkish contempt for females" (396), Margaret Fuller claims Milton to be one of the fathers of her own age, a true understander of liberty, justice, marriage, and education, a father whose achievement still far outdistanced that of America, his child (39). Milton, like Spenser, certainly establishes the epic tradition in which "the active heroic role is shared equally between the sexes" (Webber 12). In this respect, Eve can no longer be considered as an object of Milton's patriarchal imagination. On the contrary, she becomes the image of a genuine female subjectivity, not created but recognized by a progressive, liberal Milton. His epic represents Adam and Eve as free in both electing marriage and continuing to love each other. In Eve, Milton gives poetic expression to the new and improved position of woman in Puritan marriage.

Since Adam realizes his own deficiency, which in God he cannot find, he asks God for "fellowship ... fit to participate/ All rational delight" (VIII; 389-91). He expresses his need for an equal partner:

Among unequals what society
Can sort, what harmony or true delight?
Which must be mutual, in proportion due
Giv'n and receiv'd;
Of fellowship I speak
Such as I seek, fit to participate
All rational delight.
(VIII; 383-391)

This kind of relationship between Adam and Eve emphasizes an equality which is based not on sameness, since they have different gifts and their sexes are "not equal," but on mutual completion and harmonious union. Therefore, in Adam's dream, God's voice defines Eve as "Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self/ Thy wish, exactly to thy heart's desire" (VIII; 450-1). Here, Eve appears to be a perfect companion or partner, rather than an inferior being or

subordinate woman.

Eve is Adam's "other self," by which Milton implies that Adam's solitary being is imperfect and only a half, not a whole, being. Using the classical term for an ideal friendship, an other self, Milton argues "against the biblical term for wife, "helpmeet" (fit help)" (Hughes ed. 373n). In *Doctrine of Divorce*, interpreting "God's intention" in creating Eve, he wrote: "A meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and the noblest end of marriage" (Hughes ed. 707). He obviously has the Renaissance idea about marriage and friendship in mind, a relationship through which the male and female are able to increase their virtue in a Neo-Platonic sense (Hughes ed. 385n). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton simply confirms his claim in *Christian Doctrine* that the biblical notion of marriage "consisted in the mutual love, delight, help and society of husband and wife, though the husband having greater authority" which "became still greater after the fall" (*Complete Prose Works* VI: 355). Milton's concept of marriage demands not only that woman should be accorded a rational capacity, but also that the difference between a husband and a wife's reasoning ability be one of degree, not of kind. Since the basis of holy wedlock is mental communion, Adam's request for another self suggests his desire to have intellectual communication as well as companionship. Paul Siegel claims that Puritan emphasis on fellowship and partnership was influenced by Renaissance humanists who, like Thomas More, believed women to have rational souls that could be educated (42-53). Likewise, Milton's Eve is not ontologically distinct from Adam; Eve is, rather, his partner. Throughout *Paradise Lost*, Adam describes how he needs a female in order to be complete. This philosophy of coinciding opposites and the existence of the whole, overflows into Milton's work of the creation of man and woman:

Part of my soul I seek thee, and thee claim
 My other half ...
 (IV; 487-8)

In the sexually complete nature of a female-and-male origin, love is situated always in the center of their spiritual ascension toward the divine one-ness.

Intuitively aware that each sex is incomplete, they sense a belonging together. Each separate self dissolves into the other self, and in that dissolution the two sexes become one. In this sense, androgyny in Renaissance literature, especially in Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, is "not just as a minor by-product but as a major preoccupation" (Davies 5).

The moment Adam sees Eve, he perceives Eve as a part of his body and names her: "I [Adam] now see/ Bone of my Bone, Flesh of my Flesh, my Self/ Before me; Woman is her name, of Man/ Extracted." Together, they become "one Flesh, one Heart, one Soul" (VIII; 494-499). Adam's emphasis on the possessive "my-ness" in his description of Eve and his identification of Eve with his self lead the two different sexes into a fused "one." At this point, Milton's Neo-Platonic vision of the two sexes as "Hermaphrodite," i.e. Androgyny, is clearly embedded into his definition of marriage, into which his idea of woman is built:

mixt with Love
And sweet compliance, which declare unfeign'd
Union of Mind, or in us both one Soul;
Harmony to behold in wedded pair
More grateful than harmonious sound to the ear,
Yet these subject not;
(VIII; 603-7).

That is, male and female are two aspects of creation, like light and darkness, which convey distinction, yet are part of an inseparable whole, as well as two separate parts.

In *Tetrachordon*, Milton wrote that the first parent could not be both male and female, sneering at the original hermaphrodite as a Jewish fable and a piece of "Plato's wit, as if man at first had bin [sic] created *Hermaphrodite*" (*Complete Prose Works* II; 589). However, the idea is seemingly irresistible to Milton; in *Paradise Lost*, he depicts the image of the hermaphrodite with a vision of wholeness composed of a "twofold nature ... male and female." He knows the mystical Renaissance philosophies which offer a unique and coherent story of the first androgynous being. The story of the first human

being who is both male and female is as old as Plato's *Symposium*. In fact, some Judeo-Christian traditions include this myth as a minor report on the early chapters of Genesis. The first human, Adam, is made in the image of God, who is pure reason and pure spirit. Thus, Adam is also reason and spirit; he is basically masculine reason which has controlled and subsumed that female element most often defined as the emotions. In other words, Genesis was written with the desire to illuminate Christianity with an absorbing androgynous philosophy and also with the need to christianize the pagan myth. Eve is undoubtedly created chronologically later than Adam in order to complete Adam as an equal as God. Since Eve fully takes part in the image of God, her feminine element is a necessary and subsumed part of Adam and represents the different quality needed to complete the wholeness, i.e. "oneness." Milton's universe, which displays the Platonic vision of the whole in the part and the part in the whole, reflects the androgynous fertility in the relationship between the poet and the Muse, and in the love-bond between Adam and Eve: Father Sun and Mother Earth are celebrated as desiring one another, with the secret art of unifying contraries. Milton never polarizes male solar light and female lunar light into units of solitary opposition, but has them "communicate" back and forth, desiring return to unity. Raphael teaches Adam:

thou wilt descry
 Communicating Male and Female Light,
 Which two great Sexes animate the World.
 (VIII; 149-51)

The male and female sexes, shown, in great degree, both in their natural communication light, constitute the universe and the fabric of the poem. Although its characters and its bardic voices are sexually distinct, the poem is androgynous. In this sense, Milton's androgynous vision can be considered to be a male attempt to appropriate a God-like creative power for himself, by containing the female creative and reproductive function in society. Milton's Eve, in other words, revives, recognizes and affirms the feminine within the

poet's own nature. For Milton, she is the only source that can restore a sense of completeness to Adam, through the marriage of the twinned halves of a single being, similar to the relationships of Psyche and Eros, and of the poet and the Muse.⁸⁾

The poet's invocations of the Muse repeat the sexual harmonies of Adam and Eve. Just as Eve's creation remedies Adam's "single imperfection" (VIII; 423), the Muse rescues the poet from "solitude": he is "not alone," he says in the invocation to Book VII, "while thou/ Visit'st my slumbers Nightly" (VII; 28-9). More significantly, the female goddess brings her "Celestial Light" (III; 51) to the blind poet. In other words, the transcendental intensities of the female spirit lead the blind poet to see the celestial world that he and the others could not perceive with "mortal sight":

So much the rather thou Celestial Light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.
(III; 51-5)

By incorporating the female Muse into the prior, higher, and more inclusive person of the male spirit, the harmonies of the invocations enable to reformulate the terms of transcendence. The invocation of Urania in Book VII suggests how this new form of transcendence resolves:

Thou with Eternal Wisdom didst converse,
Wisdom thy Sister, and with her didst play
In presence of th'Almighty Father ...
(VII; 9-11)

Here again, Milton depicts the two female celestial spirits being subsumed into their father. Janet Halley argues that Milton strives for poetic

8) Milton's Muse, Urania, signifies a source of his poetic inspiration with feminine sexuality.

transcendence as a “strategy for evading dangers imposed by the female figure” (248). By pointing out the association of the textuality and the female powers, she concludes that “Urania, Eve, the female figure must participate in this text, as a harmonic other half whose meaning originates in male intention” (250-1). These constant recurring images of harmonious fusion, initiated by imperfect male, make us acknowledge the primarily androgynous nature of male-and-female’s ontological relationship.

In other words, Adam and Eve are represented as an ontological unit as well as two separate individuals with constant and dynamic interchange. In a dynamic growing balance, they experience separate existence, as well as a wholeness in their union. After their union, it is Eve who begins to test her judgement and thought with the potential power of growth. With the exception of Diane McColley, most critics ignore Eve’s growth from inexperience to independent decisions based on experiential thought. In Book IX, she experiences growing-up pains from the “unexperient thought” (IX; 457) to the yearning for her independence from loftier beings. She persistently speculates and asks about her and Adam’s precarious living situation, which is constantly threatened by “a Foe.” She longs to be strong enough to stand alone, “as one who loves and some unkindness meets”:

If this be our condition, thus to dwell
 In narrow circuit strait’n’d by a Foe,
 Subtle or violent, we not endu’d
 Single with like defense, wherever met,
 How are we happy, still in fear of harm?
 (IX; 322-26)

Whereas our “Patriarch of Mankind” accomodates himself within the given realm of “fear of harm” without realizing his limited circumstances of existence, the “Daughter of God and Man” conceives intuitively the frail nature of their imperfect state and continues to ask: “what is Faith, Love, Virtue unassay’d/ Alone, without exterior help sustain’d?” (IX; 336-7). Adam’s reply to her clearly “echoes God’s discourse on Free Will uttered in Heaven

(III; 80-134)" (Tillyard 254):

God left free the Will, for what obeys
Reason, is free, and Reason he made right,
But bid her will beware, and still erect,
Lest by some fair appearing good surpris'd
She dictate false, and misinform the Will
To do what God expressly hath forbid.

(IX; 351-356)

The conflict between Eve's discontent with her subservient position and Adam's unquestioning obedience nearly replays the preperformed argument between Satan's rebellious desire for freedom and Abdiel's sense of servitude in Book VI. However, the two conflicting forces in each pair of individuals are complimentary parts of a whole ontological unit.

After Eve yields to Satan's ambitious and aspirational temptation, she suffers from her psychological detachment from Adam and whether she must share her experience with her other half, Adam, or keep it to herself.

But keep the odds of Knowledge in my power
Without Copartner? so to add what wants
In Female Sex, the more to draw his Love,
And render me more equal, and perhaps,
A thing not undesirable, sometime
Superior; for inferior who is free?

(IX; 820-25)

Although patriarchal Milton diminishes the first female's subversive desire to be more equal and superior by caricaturing her self-protective female instinct: "Adam wedded to another Eve,/ Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct" (IX; 828-9), he describes Eve's desperate desire to be equal with increasing pathos:

Thou therefore also taste, that equal Lot
May join us, equal Joy, as equal Love;

Lest thou not tasting, different degree
Disjoin us, and I then too late renounce
Deity for thee, when Fate will not permit.
(IX; 881-5)

Adam's fall, in a sense, is more complicated than Eve's. While she is undoubtedly deceived by metamorphosed Satan, Adam understands exactly what has happened and chooses to stay with his other half in order to sustain his sense of wholeness, thus resulting in his transgression of God's forbiddance. When he takes Eve's fall for his own, he reinforces his insatiable desire to be "One":

I feel
The Link of Nature draw me: Flesh of Flesh,
Bone of my Bone thou art, and from thy State
Mine never shall be parted, bliss of woe.
So forcible within my heart I feel
The Bond of Nature draw me to my own,
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
(IX; 913-6; 955-7)

The fall, therefore, amplifies the importance and necessity of being together. Adam reassures that "Our State cannot be sever'd, we are one./ One Flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself" (IX; 958-9). Eve cannot be a vain and corrupted creature who made the Fall inevitable, since God does not create beauty and pleasure only to tempt men. Beauty and pleasure are, in fact, "rightly tempered, potential ingredients of virtue" (McColley 34).

Adam's long soliloquy of despair and frustration carries the most misogynous condemnation toward woman and asks God what was his intention when he created woman-kind:

O why did God,
Creator wise, that peopl'd highest Heav'n
With Spirits Masculine, create at last

This novelty on Earth, this fair defect
Of Nature, and not fill the World at once
With Men as Angels without Feminine,
Or find some other way to generate
Mankind?
(X; 889-93)

Through the self-questioning process within his dramatic monologue, Adam tries to understand God's will. However, Adam's long ratiocination does not reach contrition. It is not Adam but Eve who experiences emotional change and growth, and who begins the first step toward their redemption and regeneration:

both have sinn'd, but thou
Against God only, I against God and thee,
And to the place to judgement will return,
There with my cries importune Heaven, that all
The sentence from thy head remov'd may light
On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,
Mee mee only just object of his ire.
(X; 930-6)

Eve assumes complete responsibility for both her and Adam, going so far as to even wish to bear the punishment for both of them. It is only through her own sincere repentance which "wrought/ Commiseration" (X; 938-9) that the regeneration is also shared with Adam. Once again Eve proves herself as Adam's rescuer. Adam's turning to Eve strongly implies his confession, his prayer for God's mercy, and his ultimate redemption. Therefore, hope begins to dawn in their visionary future. With the final triumph of Good over Evil, Adam, led by Eve, takes a grand step toward regeneration and contrition.

Notably, Book IX and X are frequently discussed to support Milton's misogynous attitude toward woman through Adam's voice. However, it is obvious that the entire structural process of the first man's rise, fall and redemption, which is the central theme of *Paradise Lost*, emphasizes the

importance of men and woman's harmonious union. Furthermore, it is Eve who plays the crucial and pivotal role in the climactic scene.

No one can deny that Milton is locked into his culture's incorrect assumption of the inferiority of women. However, Milton's Eve in *Paradise Lost* has been a source of vigorous controversy. Some critics believe Eve is purely a creation of Milton's patriarchal imagination, while others dispute this by insisting she is actually the image of a genuine female subjectivity, not created but recognized by a politically and religiously progressive, liberal Milton.

In this paper, I began my discussion by introducing the reasons why some feminists usually attacked Milton. That is, Milton has been considered to be a stereotypical patriarchal writer who creates his great canonical achievement through a horrible distortion of woman's image. Such feminists argue, moreover, that Milton describes Eve as instinctively obedient and submissive, and that he perfectly understands and unarguedly accepts her inferiority in this prelapsarian stage.

However, as I have pointed out, those critics largely miss the point that Milton, whose literary inheritance was helplessly patriarchal, actually helps awaken a suppressed group of readers by emphasizing Eve's invaluable spiritual shift through suffering and patience. Therefore, more recent feminists try to revise the characteristic opinion of Milton as a misogynist by pointing out that the male-female relationship is undoubtedly depicted as a reciprocal communion.

As discussed, Milton accepts the Neo-Platonic idea of man and woman and uses it to create the two separate sexes within his androgynous vision. In *Paradise Lost*, unlike other epic poems, Milton places the first woman Eve in a heroic role at the center of the most crucial scene of the entire story. Furthermore, Eve plays a necessary though subsumed part of Adam, and represents a complementary quality needed to complete the whole. This single ontological concept reinforces the sense of Adam and Eve's inseparable oneness, as they experience the Fall and march toward the Redemption.

Certainly, Milton never considered Eve to be superior to Adam, though the possibility of her equality with Adam has been questioned. In *Paradise Lost*,

by redefining the ideal relationship of Adam and Eve as copartners equal yet different, Milton reshapes the image of woman through his rewriting of the Bible with his androgynous vision.

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