

Article

“Let Us Have Our Libertie”: John Milton and Aemelia Lanyer Read Eve’s Fall

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Abstract: This essay compares two Renaissance poetic narratives that interpret the story of Eve’s fall in Genesis: Aemelia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. It explores how each uses Eve’s fall to ground a radical call to liberation from oppressive hierarchical structures. In Milton’s case, these oppressive structures are political and ecclesial, while in Lanyer’s case they are the hierarchies of gender. It goes on to argue that there is a chiasmic relationship between these two narrative exhortations to liberty. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s endorses a political autonomy for the male subject that not only retains, but actively depends on the subordination of women to men’s domestic and spiritual rule within marriage. In *Salve Deus*, Lanyer utterly rejects the idea that women can only relate to God in such a mediated fashion. Yet, because of her precarious position as a commoner, and as a woman writing about religious matters, she depends on a more traditional appeal to her social superiors. The essay concludes with a consideration of Lanyer’s and Milton’s position within the evolution of modernity and what philosopher Charles Taylor calls a “direct-access society.”

Keywords: John Milton; *Paradise Lost*; Aemelia Lanyer; Genesis; Eve; direct-access society; gender; liberty



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1. Introduction—Genesis and the Need for Interpretation

The account of Adam and Eve’s fall in Genesis is vexingly brief. In just twenty-four sparse verses, with a little cajoling from a savvy reptile, humankind goes from enjoying the bliss of Eden to facing the curses of hunger, toil, pain in childbirth, and death. In the typically parsimonious style of the Jewish scriptures, the story presented in Genesis 3 provides only the briefest descriptions of setting and psychological motivation, and much of its narrative power emerges out of its limited diegetic detail. We are not told why the serpent desires to trick Eve or why she fails to dispute his claim that, should she eat the forbidden fruit, “Ye shall not surely die.”¹ Even more troublingly, though we get a brief description of Eve’s interior experience as she decides to eat the fruit (she saw “that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise”), Adam’s mental processes are entirely elided: “[the woman] took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” Where was Adam during Eve’s conversation with the snake? Was he present the whole time? Did he even know what he was eating? None of these questions are directly answered.

In the opening chapter of his magnum opus *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach famously contrasts the laconic style of the Torah with the ancient Homeric epics. While poems like the *Odyssey* present “externalized, uniformly illuminated phenomena, at a definite time and in a definite place, connected together without lacunae in a perpetual foreground,” the stories narrated in the Pentateuch offer “the externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else left in obscurity” (Auerbach 2013, p. 11). For Auerbach, the biblical style is “permeated with the most unrelieved suspense” such that its very structure places a profound interpretive demand on readers, and in this way asserts a striking kind of authority over its audience, requiring them to situate themselves within the narrative’s ethical and historical horizons:

The text of the Biblical narrative, then, is so greatly in need of interpretation on the basis of its own content, its claim to absolute authority forces it still further in the same direction. Far from seeking, like Homer, merely to make us forget our own reality for a few hours, it seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history. (ibid., p. 15)

In the essay that follows, I aim to consider alongside each other two important seventeenth-century interpreters of Genesis 3, Aemelia Lanyer and John Milton, both writers who clearly felt compelled to respond to the interpretive demands of the biblical style. Both authors reacted to that demand not with prose exegetical analyses of scripture, but with poetic dilations of the events surrounding the fall. For Lanyer, this took the form of her enigmatic sequence of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), the first collection of poetry by a woman author to be published in England; for Milton, his response to Genesis 3 became the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, which unabashedly proclaims its intent to “pursu[e] / Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime” (l. 15–16).²

There are remarkable similarities between these two ambitious poetic riffs on the scriptural account of “Man’s first disobedience,” though obviously Milton’s epic is by far the better-known poem. Yet, despite the fact Lanyer’s text fell into obscurity until the second half of the twentieth century, when critics rightly began to recognize its historical importance and aesthetic accomplishments, we can easily see several ways that Lanyer’s poem anticipated the achievements of Milton’s. Both authors take biblical stories and expand on them with staggering license and originality and both present their works as divinely inspired. Both also attempt to synthesize the claims of universal history that Auerbach sees as central to the rhetoric of scripture with an expanded narrative style that ultimately emerges out of Greco-Roman antiquity. For both Milton and Lanyer, though, their narrative dilations of Genesis 3 go well beyond simply reimagining a terse passage of scripture in a new generic mold. Their respective reimaginings become centrepieces in two sweeping accounts of human history, each of which makes a radical call to liberation from the mediating authority of hierarchical structures each author finds oppressive. In Milton’s case, these oppressive structures are political and ecclesial, while in Lanyer’s case they are the hierarchies of gender. Ironically, there is something of a chiasmic relationship between these two narrative exhortations to liberty. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s dilation of the scriptural narrative endorses a political autonomy for the male subject that not only retains, but actively depends on the subordination of women to men’s domestic and spiritual rule within marriage. In *Salve Deus*, Lanyer utterly rejects the idea that women can only relate to God in a mediated fashion, via the spiritual authority of men. Yet, because of her precarious position as a commoner, and as a woman writing about religious matters, she depends on a more traditional appeal to the mediating power of her social superiors, while at the same time reconfiguring the classed hierarchy necessary for that appeal as a shared feminine domain governed by piety rather than arbitrary power.

2. Genesis 3 and the “Woman Question”

One way the narrative of the fall in Genesis asserts its universalizing claims is by treating its protagonists as archetypes. In fact, it is only after the divine curse is enumerated that Adam names his wife Eve, *Havah* in Hebrew, which derives from a verb that can mean “to breathe” or “to give life.” Until that point, she is referred to simply as “the woman” or as the wife of the man. As readers have always recognized, therefore, the curse that falls on Eve, that “thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” makes a normative claim about gender relations: that the subordination of women to men is in at least some sense divinely sanctioned. Genesis 3 does not explain the juridical logic of this punishment or Eve’s condemnation to pain in childbirth, but from fairly early on in the Christian tradition, it was common for interpreters to assert that Eve’s greater culpability for the first human sin justified a patriarchal hierarchy. In the First Epistle to Timothy, traditionally ascribed to the apostle Paul, the author explains that women cannot

teach or have authority over men because “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Timothy 2:14). Most of the Church Fathers echoed this sentiment, or even went further, as Ambrose does when he claims not only that Eve “was first to be deceived” but that she was actively “responsible for deceiving the man” (Ambrose 1961, p. 301). Augustine, whose influence was second only to scripture in the Reformation-era milieu of Lanyer and Milton, takes a slightly different approach. For him, it is too much to believe that Adam, whom he also read as an allegory of human reason, could have been outwitted by Eve. Instead, he claims, Adam “yielded to Eve” out of “obedience to a social compulsion . . . , as husband to wife, as the only man in the world to the only woman.” For Augustine, this does not make Adam less culpable, since he “sinned knowingly and deliberately,” but it does give him a nobler motivation for sinning (Augustine 1952, p. 378). Interestingly, as I discuss in more detail below, Milton follows Augustine in this regard, creating an Adam who sins not out of ignorance or because of Eve’s deception, but because he “feel[s]/The Link of Nature draw [him]” (IX. 913–14).

The issue of Eve’s culpability in the fall, and the question of its implications for gender hierarchy in the societies of Christian Europe, never really faded from view, but it did begin to take on fresh urgency from the late 1400s onwards. In this period, the “new learning” of humanism began slowly to influence the education of elite and upwardly mobile women, though contrary to the intentions of the pedagogues who were promoting it. Nevertheless, in part because of the broader humanist impulse to interrogate societal mores and political institutions vis à vis ancient Rome, and in part because educated women entered vigorously and creatively into this process of reflection, the “querelle des femmes” (aka “the woman question”) became a hot topic. Writers ranging from Christine de Pizan, to Baldassare Castiglione, to Laura Cerata and Erasmus all engaged it. As the debate developed, an increasing number of voices, both male and female, made compelling cases for the intellectual, the spiritual, and (more occasionally) the political equality of women, though the counterarguments defending patriarchy became, if possible, even more vituperative.

In England, after the death of Edward VI in 1553, when the nation saw a continuous half-century of rule by women monarchs, the querelle des femmes had even more obvious political consequences, and interpretations about Eve’s actions in Genesis 3 were often marshalled to reject the legitimacy of a female-led regime. In John Knox’s famously splenetic attack against the regime of the Roman Catholic Mary I, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), we get a very clear sense that the events in the garden pertain directly to his argument that the reign of a woman is repugnant to a Christian polity:

Against God can nothing be more manifest than that a woman shall be exalted to reign above man; for the contrary sentence hath he pronounced in these words: Thy will shall be subject to thy husband, and he shall bear dominion over thee. (Knox 1994, p. 12)³

During the reign of Elizabeth I, which brought about a certain amount of political stability and enjoyed in its final years a good deal of popular support, the cognitive dissonance around women became even more pronounced. On the one hand, society at large retained a robustly defended default to misogyny in every area of life; on the other hand, the woman in charge of the country clearly demonstrated that her capacities were the equal of any prince in Europe. Following her reign, therefore, interpretations such as Knox’s, which used the story of the fall to deny that a woman could be a head of state, became rather less common, but published prose assertions of women’s inferiority carried on unabated. What was new was that these attacks on women, often satirical pamphlets made for quick distribution, began to receive published rebuttals. Such was the case for Joseph Sweetnam’s *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615), which was published just four years after Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, and which was responded to in print by three different women critics, most famously Rachel Speght in *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617).

The back and forth between Sweetnam and Speght helpfully exemplifies how early modern debates about Eve's culpability played out. Women, according to Sweetnam, being made from Adam's rib, "are crooked by nature," and were inclined from the very start to cause men trouble: "She was no sooner made but straightway her mind was set upon mischief, for by her aspiring mind and wanton will she quickly procured man's fall. And therefore ever since they are and have been a woe unto man . . ." (Henderson and McManus 1985, p. 194). Speght, in turn, not only rejects Sweetnam's implication that women were created with an inclination to sin from the start, she reads a number of aspects of Genesis 3 as evidence that Adam, in fact, was the worse sinner. It was only after Adam sinned, she points out, that the couple became aware of their "spiritual nakedness," and it was only because the man sinned that the divine curse could fall on humankind for all posterity, since it was the man "in whom lay the active power of generation." She also points out the irony of the misogynistic position: if Adam was superior to Eve, he is obviously more to blame. Adam, "being the stronger vessel . . . should have yielded greatest obedience to God." When Eve sinned, moreover, she did so with good intentions:

In her giving of the fruit to eat had she no malicious intent towards him, but did therein show a desire to make her husband partaker of that happiness, which she thought by their eating they should both have enjoyed. (Speght 1996, p. 15)

Speght goes on to remind her reader that, while Adam's sin sealed the deal of human fallenness, the very first promise recorded in scripture is offered to the woman: "that by her Seed should the Serpents head be broken." It is for this reason, argues Speght, that Adam named his wife *Havah*, not because she is the progenitor of humankind in general, but because she would "bring forth the Savior from sin," who would bring eternal life to the faithful (*ibid.*, pp. 15–16).

3. Lanyer Reads Eve

As Shannon Miller has argued, there is an obvious intellectual trajectory from Lanyer's poem, through the prose tracts of writers like Speght, to *Paradise Lost*, where "the seventeenth-century querelle des femmes appears internalized" (Miller 2012, p. 158).⁴ In many ways, though, Lanyer's and Milton's poems are more sophisticated and ambitious in their treatment of women and Genesis 3 than the prose disputations that frequently appeared in the years between their publication. Texts like Sweetnam's were the early-modern equivalent of click-bait, designed (successfully) to stir up a strong reaction rather than to present a serious take on a question of public significance. Lanyer and Milton had aesthetic as well as argumentative goals, and they crafted their texts for a much narrower audience. Lanyer clearly has an elite female readership in mind, something that is underscored by the extended preface, which includes five substantial poems and one prose paragraph dedicated to different women. But she also imagines an audience defined by feminine virtue and piety. This is why she begins her prefatory address "To all vertuous Ladies in generall" by calling forth "Each blessed Lady that in Virtue spends/Your pretious time to beautifie your soules" (ll. 1–2). Milton, likewise, in his invocation to Book VII of the epic, prays that his poem would "fit audience find, though few" (31), thus providing a nice little inducement to readers to see themselves as part of a distinguished cohort.

Lanyer and Milton are also much more likely than Sweetnam, for all his satirical glibness, to go "off book," to be highly selective in the biblical passages they choose to address, or to invent scenes wholly without reference to scripture. Lanyer was an attentive and studious reader of scripture; her passion narrative includes scenes carefully chosen from all four gospels and her phrasings indicate that she was consulting more than one English translation (Fleck 2017). Even so, she is quite happy to leave out bits of scripture that do not suit her narrative, especially those that might make women look bad. The section of her poem that narrates Christ's passion, for example, includes no mention of the servant girl (present in all the gospel accounts save Matthew) who accuses Peter of being a follower of Jesus, and so prompts his denial of Christ. In other contemporary poetic interpolations of the events leading up to Christ's death, such as Robert Southwell's *St.*

Peter's Complaint, descriptions of this scene often provided male authors an opportunity for misogynistic tirades (Southwell 1967).⁵ In this omission, Lanyer pointedly skirts around a text with the wrong ideological baggage. Even more surprising is the fact that Lanyer's poem would address the story of Eve's fall at all, not to mention the fact that it appears right in the middle of the story of the passion, as a kind of flashback inserted into Christ's judgement by Pilate. Lanyer's intent is to regender the Christian story of salvation with a juxtaposition that sets the women of biblical history against its men. In the aggregate, she convincingly points out, the women of scripture come out better on all fronts, in their mercy, humility, faithfulness, and repentance.

The specific woman in Lanyer's passion narrative that prompts the turn to the story of Eve is Pilate's wife, who is mentioned in just a single verse of the Bible, Matthew 27:19: "When [Pilate] was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Significantly enlarging the episode, Lanyer reads Pilate's wife as "the first Christian before the fact, a prophetic voice challenging Pilate because of her sympathy for Christ's likely suffering" (Hodgson 2003, p. 109). Yet, the truly innovative feature of Lanyer's reading, and as far as this author is aware an utterly unique one, is its choice to treat Pilate's wife as archetypal in the same manner as Eve. So it is that her plea to her husband bookends the multi-stanza interlude on Eve. From her exhortation before that story begins we see clearly that she recognizes Christ's theological significance:

Open thine eies, that thou the truth mai'st see,
Doe not the thing that goes against thy heart;
Condemne not him that must thy Sauour be;
But view his holy Life, his good desert. (ll. 755–58)

And when we return to her after the subsection identified as "Eve's Apologie" in the marginal notes, it is Pilate's wife who "speakes for all" (l. 834) that is, who represents a new archetype for the hierarchies of gender in Christian society. In this model, just as Christ becomes the new Adam (1 Corinthians 15), Pilate's wife becomes the new Eve. This is a somewhat distributed typology, since Lanyer also later takes the more familiar tack of reading the Virgin Mary as a second Eve, with her obedience to God's call counteracting the first woman's disobedience. But the point of toggling between Eve and Pilate's wife, rather than between the mother of Jesus and the mother of humankind, is to generate parallels rather than contrasts.

True, the transition to the story of Eve's fall begins with a contrast, but it isn't between the faithful wife of Pilate and the unfaithful wife of Adam; instead, it is between the merciless treatment of Christ by men in the Bible and the good intentions that led to Eve's sin in the garden: "... now your [men's] indiscretion sets us free, / And makes our former fault much lesse appeare" (ll. 761–62). Even so, as Lanyer's version of the story develops, it sets up an implicit analogy between Eve and Pilate's wife: both women live under the authority of a man; in both cases their relationship with God is mediated by a man; and in each story the woman's husband fails to live up to the expectations that come along with his authority. Lanyer precedes Speght in arguing that if Eve was made from Adam and subordinate to him, he ought to have recognized her sin and refused to take part in it:

... surely *Adam* cannot be excusde,
Her fault though great, yet hee was most too blame;
What Weaknesse offerd, Strength might haue refusde,
Being Lord of all, the greater was his shame. (ll. 770–80)

As she saliently identifies, moreover, only Adam was present for the prohibition against eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in Genesis 1, since she was not created until chapter 2. Adam, "the perfect'st man that ever breath'd on earth, / ... from Gods mouth receiv'd that strait command" (l. pp. 786–87), and it was only through her husband that Eve even knew about the garden's rules. And if this weren't enough to clinch the

argument, Lanyer follows up with two more points in her case for the lesser culpability of Eve. To male readers inclining to Joseph Sweetnam's position, that Eve was somehow "crooked" from the start, she argues that any congenital defects Eve might have could only have come from Adam: "If any Evill did in her remaine, / Beeing made of him, he was the ground of all" (ll. 809–10). Also like Speght, she reads Eve's offer of the fruit to Adam not as a deception, but as motivated by a desire to share the power of knowledge with her husband. She goes even further than Speght, however, and reverses the polarities of sin ascribed to the original couple by Augustine. Whereas, in the Church Father's account, Eve sins both out of pride and out of a desire for the material pleasures of the fruit, while Adam sins out of a desire to remain bound to his wife, the opposite is true in Lanyer's version. Eve's sin is motivated by a desire for something good, and it is she who exhibits the bond of conjugal love when she gives the apple to her husband. Adam, meanwhile, is the sensualist who, rather than being deceived, gives in to the temptations of bodily pleasure:

We know right well [Adam] did discretion lacke,
Beeing not perswaded thereunto at all;
If *Eve* did erre, it was for knowledge sake,
The fruit beeing faire perswaded him to fall (ll. 795–98)

She thus turns Augustine's inability to believe that Adam was deceived on its head, running with the premise but utterly rejecting its conclusions. Adam, who ought to have known better, who "ha[d] powre to rule both Sea and Land," was "with one Apple wonne" over to sin (ll. 789–90).

Eve's peccadillo thus compares positively in both directions, when set beside Adam's sin in Genesis, and when judged in comparison to the execution of Christ, an infinitely greater evil carried out by the men in the gospels. In setting up the parallel between Pilate's wife and Eve, it's clear that the ultimate problem for women is the fact that their relationship to God has been mediated by men. If Eve had had a direct relationship with God in the garden, having heard and understood the prohibition from the divine voice itself, she never would have been vulnerable to deception by the serpent (not coincidentally, another "he" in the story). Similarly, Pilate's wife can recognize Christ's identity and purpose, but because of her subordination to her husband, and by proxy to the whole patriarchal system of secular authority he represents, she can do nothing to save him. The best-known lines of the poem, therefore, call forth a vision of women's liberation, in which women would be freed from subordination to any man save Christ himself, the only male with any real claim to authority over them:

Then let us [women] have our Libertie againe,
And challenge to your selues [men] no Sov'raigntie;
You came not in the world without our paine,
Make that a barre against your crueltie;
Your fault beeing greater, why should you disdaine,
Our beeing your equals, free from tyranny?
If one weake woman simply did offend,
This sinne of yours hath no excuse, nor end. (ll. 825–32)

As Pamela Benson has argued, Lanyer thus creates a narrative of salvation history in which, though womankind was cursed to subordination at the fall, they were freed from this subjection after the coming of Christ, who was recognized and honoured by women, but killed by men. Yet due to the pernicious power of sin, men have continued to unjustly assert their tyrannical rule over women, even though they have no right to do so in the Christian dispensation (Benson 2018, pp. 213–14). Lanyer thus puts a feminist spin on the Pauline logic, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4), though for her it is not only the Mosaic Covenant that Christ came to supersede, but the laws of gendered hierarchy as well. Structurally, of course, this appeal is deeply Protestant, since the call to "have our Libertie againe" involves a

return to the purity of a supposedly original Christianity, in which each believer has a direct relationship to Christ unencumbered by the accreted corruptions that mark human authority. For Lanyer, therefore, the dismantling of patriarchal rule is no different than the rejection of Papal authority was for the early English reformers, or the dismantling of the episcopacy would be for Milton. Just as for Milton, the corrupted structures of church hierarchy aim to replace God with a “bodily forme,” so too for Lanyer does male authority usurp the place of the divine, putting a husband where only God should be (Milton 1998).⁶ We need only look to the cases of Eve and Pilate’s wife, Lanyer reminds her readers, to see the dire effects of such idolatry.

4. The Paradoxes of Milton’s Eve

Like *Salve Deus*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost* dramatically expands the story of Eve’s fall, transforming the first three chapters of Genesis into a twelve-book epic. Also like Lanyer’s poem, it connects the details of the first woman’s sin both with a sweeping account of human history and with a political vision of human liberty. The moral and political implications of Milton’s narrative, however, are much more challenging to pin down than Lanyer’s. This is partially because the narrator in *Paradise Lost* provides far fewer interpretive explanations of the text, usually leaving it up to the reader to do most of that work. Whereas Lanyer is didactic throughout, it is only on occasion that Milton feels the need to jump in and explain things. A more vexing problem, though, is the fact that many aspects of the epic’s plot and dialogue appear out of sync with the “official position” the Miltonic narrator endorses, if not on occasion flatly contradictory to it. This is perhaps especially so in the case of gender hierarchy, since every explicit statement about the relationship between men and women affirms the divine ordination of male rule, but many events in the story seem to trouble a rigid assertion of patriarchy.

This tension emerges from the fact that Milton’s primary goal in the poem is not to justify the rule of men over women, but “to justify the ways of God to men” (I. 26). For Milton, the only way a good God could preside over a fallen world was if sin was the result of humankind’s totally free choice. Milton was unusual in this regard compared to his republican political allies, who were mostly strict Calvinists. They generally subscribed to the belief that, as the Westminster Confession puts it, God “freely and unchangeably ordaine[d] whatsoever comes to pass” (*Westminster Confession of Faith 1647*, p. 8). *Paradise Lost* is committed to exactly the opposite perspective. In Book III, when God the Father foretells the events that will occur in the remainder of the poem, he insists that he created Adam and Eve “Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (III. 99). Anything that might call this sufficiency into question poses something of a problem for Milton. As we have already seen, though, early modern interpretations that used Genesis 3 to justify women’s subordination often implied that Eve’s intellectual or moral capacities were less than Adam’s, or that she was somehow naturally inclined to sin. Lanyer and Speght both make ironic use of exactly this claim, pointing out that if Eve’s faculties were less than Adam’s, she can’t really bear equal responsibility for the fall. *Paradise Lost*, published about fifty years after *Salve Deus* and *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, clearly registers this argument, though the epic’s response is an idiosyncratic one. For Milton, if the fall of humankind is truly to be free, then it must be fully within both Adam’s and Eve’s power to resist temptation. If Eve is culpable, she must be capable.⁷ Thus Milton finds himself in something of a double bind. On the one hand, he wants to present male sovereignty as somehow natural and obvious even before the fall. On the other hand, he wants to present an Eve who is just as able to resist the fall as Adam. The dilemma, in other words, is that if Eve is not at least in some sense Adam’s equal, Milton’s theodicy becomes tenuous, since it becomes unclear how sufficient Eve really is. But if Eve is just as morally and intellectually capable to resist the fall, then it becomes harder to clearly justify women’s subordination to men.⁸ This problem becomes particularly pronounced in Milton’s version of events, where the fall of Eve, unlike in the biblical narrative, appears as a totally distinct scene from the fall of Adam.

The scholarship on Milton's attitude to Eve and to women more generally is voluminous, and there's little consensus among Miltonists whether the author's work is relatively progressive on gender issues for its time or in fact quite deeply committed to misogyny, even if that misogyny is expressed in unusual ways.⁹ It is not my intention to summarize this ongoing debate here, but simply to highlight a few ways that Milton's poem tries to weave together two incommensurable impulses, one egalitarian and one patriarchal. The patriarchal perspective, as I have already mentioned, is the one that most obviously asserts itself whenever the narrator describes Adam and Eve's relationship. This is foregrounded from the moment readers first meet the couple, in Book IV, when Satan arrives in the garden to scope out enemy territory. Among the other flora and fauna of the garden, the fallen angel notices "Two of far nobler shape erect and tall" in whom "The image of thir glorious Maker shon" (IV. 288, 292). Yet, the passage moves quickly from descriptions of their shared "naked Majestie" (290) and their mutual "filial freedom" (294) to an articulation of hierarchical difference:

... though both,
Not equal, as thir sex not equal seemd;
For contemplation hee and valour formd,
For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace,
Hee for God only, shee for God in him. (IV. 295–99)

Following a long interpretive tradition, Milton here dates the origins of male superiority to creation rather than the fall, treating it as the organic result of Adam's supposedly more contemplative nature. Adam is the thinking, desiring agent, it seems, while Eve's role is passive—she is to be admired. Milton even doubles down on the principal that Lanyer so vehemently rejects, that woman's relationship to God must be mediated by man.

In the lines that immediately follow, though, Milton seems conscious that his hierarchy invokes a spectre of coercion, and attempts to guard against it with a famously bizarre digression on Adam and Eve's hair:

His fair large Front and Eye sublime declar'd,
Absolute rule; and Hyacinthin Locks,
Round from his parted forelock manly hung,
Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad:
Shee as a vail down to the slender waste,
Her unadorned golden tresses wore,
Disheveld, but in wanton ringlets wav'd,
As the Vine curls her tendrils, which impli'd,
Subjection, but requir'd with gentle sway,
And by her yielded, by him best receivd,
Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet reluctant amorous delay. (IV. 300–11)

These lines, as Stephen Dobranski argues, combine "traditional biological markers ('shoulders broad', 'slender waist') with the culturally constructed notions of a man and woman's appropriate hair length" in a manner that "emphasizes Adam and Eve's mutuality and complicates the difference in their statuses" (Dobranski 2010, p. 342). In moving from a strong assertion of difference to a focus on the contingent matter of hair-length, in other words, Milton figures the hierarchy operative in Adam and Eve's relationship as a dynamic and freely enacted interplay of activity and passivity, equally enjoyed by both. Gender hierarchy in Eden, we might say, is both natural and chosen. Adam's dominance over Eve is no more coercive than the "gentle sway" involved in his running his fingers through her hair, which, with its plant-like curling, also symbolizes the abundant procreative potential the woman shares with the Edenic vegetation. There are, in essence, two accounts of gendered hierarchy in Eden layered on top of each other: one grounded in supposedly evident intellectual and physical attributes and another based on the spontaneously emerging free choices of each distinct human.

There are similar paradoxes at work in much of the rest of the poem. Though Adam is formed “for contemplation,” Milton goes out of his way to point out that Eve has a fully developed intellect. In an important scene early in Book VIII, following the angel Raphael’s long account of Satan’s fall and the creation of the world, Adam asks the angel about the movements of the heavenly bodies. At this point, Eve, who had “sat retir’d” for the duration of the conversation, takes the opportunity to leave. As she gets up, the narrator suddenly seems worried that the audience might think Eve is uninterested in astronomy or incapable of understanding it, and corrects this misapprehension:

Yet went she not, as not with such discourse
Delighted, or not capable her eare,
Of what was high: such pleasure she reserv’d,
Adam relating, she sole Auditress;
Her Husband the Relater she preferr’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. 48–58)

Again, we see that in Milton’s pre-fall universe, the intellectual hierarchy of Adam and Eve is in a sense freely chosen, reflecting disposition rather than ability. Eve is perfectly capable of understanding Raphael, and even enjoys heady academic conversations; she just prefers to have them with Adam, and to enjoy a bit of conjugal nookie alongside.

Milton, it is important to recall, was an early advocate of companionate marriage, the idea that the main function of marriage was to provide mutually beneficial rational companionship for both parties, rather than to join families in an economic arrangement, to provide a sanctioned outlet for sexual desire, or simply to create a stable context for procreation. Indeed, it was on this basis that Milton argued in favour of legalizing divorce in a series of pamphlets he published in 1644 and 1645. If the purpose of matrimony is “the apt and cheerful conversation of man with woman, to comfort and refresh him against the evils of solitary life,” argues Milton in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, then it undermines the very essence of the institution to force couples who cannot provide that rational companionship to remain bound together (Milton 1998, p. 935). It is thus deeply important to Milton that his Eve would seem a worthy intellectual companion to Adam. It is partially because of this goal that he makes her an elegant speaker, and a compelling rhetorician.

As readers, we are introduced to Eve’s rhetorical powers in Book IV where, in a passage wholly without precedent in scripture, she tells the story of her own creation. In a digression clearly characterized by “markedly lyrical . . . forms,” Eve recounts the experience of first coming to consciousness and, in a passage that riffs on the myth of Narcissus, mistaking her reflection for another person (Nyquist 1987, p. 119). Only after a divine voice tells her “What there thou seest fair Creature is thy self” (IV. 468) does Eve get introduced to Adam, and even then she takes a little convincing before she agrees that he is really a preferable option to the figure in the water. She begins to return to “that smooth watry image” (IV. 480), and Adam has to hail her as a partner (“Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim/My other half,” IV. 487–88) and gently grab her by the hand before she willingly enters into an arrangement of companionate subordination: “I yielded, and from that time see/How beauty is excelld by manly grace/And wisdom, which alone is truly fair” (IV. 489–91). But why include such an odd addition to the biblical narrative? In part, Milton is simply developing a feature of Genesis itself, which exegetes have long noticed contains two creation accounts: one in chapter one, in which humankind is created all at once, and one in chapter two, where man and woman are created separately. Milton surpasses this scriptural precedent by having three creation narratives, each given from a different perspective. Genesis 1 serves as the basis for the account the angel Raphael gives Adam in Book VII, while Genesis 2 provides the material for Adam’s reciprocal story of his

own creation in Book VIII. In adding Eve's account, Milton surpasses even scripture, giving readers a fresh perspective on the old tale. But the specific features of this new story, not surprisingly, have clear implications for women's status and role as Milton conceives them. Eve's initial resistance to Adam's and God's authority, I contend, like her "amorous delay" described earlier in the book, is important for establishing her freedom, that she chose to submit to Adam's authority even when she might have pursued other inclinations.¹⁰ Eve was never forced to submit to Adam's authority; she recognized the appropriateness of doing so on her own (at least eventually).

Yet Eve's initial ability to resist Adam's authority, though narratively important for asserting her freely willed subordination, becomes a little more theologically unstable in another invented scene, the one in Book IX that explains why Adam is not with Eve when she falls. In this passage, Eve tries to convince Adam that they should spend a little time apart, as doing so will allow them to "divide [their] labours" (IX. 214) in the garden. Adam is opposed to this, concerned that separation will make Eve more vulnerable to the enemy Raphael warned them about. What follows is something of a contradiction: an extended dispute between unfallen rational creatures. Its conceptual problems are manifold: Why does Eve's reason now lead her in a different logical direction than Adam's? Why doesn't Eve yield to Adam's will here, as she has always done in the rest of the poem? How can such a disagreement even occur within a perfect world? For her part, Eve makes an impassioned defence of her capacities, insisting not only that she is perfectly able to resist deception and temptation on her own, but that a timid unwillingness to venture forth alone actually calls her virtues into question: "What is Faith, Love, Vertue unassaid/Alone, without exterior help sustaind?" (IX. 335–36). Interestingly, these lines closely echo Milton's own words in his 1644 anti-censorship pamphlet, *Areopagitica*: "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary . . ." (Milton 1998, p. 1006). In their new context, where we know they precede Eve's temptation and fall, they have an ominous ring. The foreshadowing is almost palpably thick, with Adam only begrudgingly consenting to their separation, ending the argument with a warning that Eve be on her guard.

Milton's addition of this extra-biblical scene performs a dangerous maneuver. Eve's departure from Adam, her withdrawal from the patterns of willing submission to her husband's guidance that define her in Book IV, creates a context in which sin is possible. At one level, Eve's refusal to heed Adam's warning narratively justifies Milton's belief in the necessity of masculine coercive power in the postlapsarian world. Eve failed to freely submit to her husband in Eden, and so, following the expulsion from the garden, women must be forced to obey their husbands' better judgement. At another level, however, the scene reveals the contradictions inherent in Milton's poetic goals. The poem, after all, comes very close to making Eve's departure from Adam the truly original sin. It's almost as if the poet cannot quite fully represent the paradox of willing companionate submission he wants Edenic marriage to exemplify. In creating a realistic and compelling Eve who must also be a worthy companion to Adam, Milton can't help creating a relationship that involves discord and the at least occasional divergence of wills. (How could Eve really be free if she *never* disagrees with Adam?) This is why Eve's feelings are hurt when Adam tells her that she needs his protection ("That thou shouldst my firmness therefore doubt/To God or thee, because we have a foe/May tempt it, I expected not to hear" IX. 279–81). If Milton were a more straightforward misogynist, or if he were not as committed to individual human freedom, there wouldn't be such a problem, since he wouldn't have to balance a strong account of Eve's capacities with a robust insistence on her rightful subordination to a man. In attempting to bring these two impulses together—to make Eve a genuine companion to Adam, with her own free will, and to insist simultaneously on her ontological subordination—Milton generates a narrative that is, theologically speaking, extremely precarious. To be who Milton wants her to be, Eve needs to be independent, with a meaningfully independent will, whilst at the same time being fundamentally "for" Adam. As Linda Gregerson articulates it, this presents both an epistemological and ideological

limit within Milton's poetic imagination: Eve's "status before the Fall has not been, cannot be, consistently conceived" (Gregerson 1995, p. 185).

The actual temptation scene in *Paradise Lost* is perhaps the least innovative part of Milton's interpolation of the fall, since it fairly straightforwardly links Eve's sin against God's authority to a rejection of Adam's. Her "rash" decision to pluck and eat, we see, almost immediately produces a prideful desire to usurp the power of both the figures placed over her. As Eve eats the fruit, she begins to entertain thoughts of "God-head" (IX. 790), and in her first soliloquy following her meal, she entertains the possibility of using the knowledge she thinks she has acquired to rule over Adam. Perhaps, thinks Eve, "[I will] keep the odds of Knowledge in my power/Without Copartner" in order to "render me more equal, and perhaps,/A thing not undesirable, sometime/Superior" (IX. 820–25). Somewhat more surprising is the fact that Eve ultimately gives up on this possibility, because she is afraid that, if the fruit does end up killing her, and Adam hasn't eaten it too, she might be replaced by "another Eve" (IX. 828). This prospect is simply too horrible for Eve to risk facing, "A death to think," and so she decides to share the fruit with Adam (IX. 830). This is, I suggest, the darkest moment in Milton's gendered reasoning. While in Lanyer's version Eve shares the fruit with Adam out of a genuine desire to offer him knowledge, in Milton's she only begrudgingly gives it over, hoping that, if she goes down, he will go with her: "*Adam* shall share with me in bliss or woe: /So dear I love him, that with him all deaths/I could endure, without him live no life" (IX. 831–33). Eve, here, articulates herself in the language of love, but this is love at its most possessive and manipulative.

There's a certain ironic symmetry at play in Milton's account since, following Augustine, he makes Adam's motivation for sinning a desire to remain bound with Eve. Adam even explicitly echoes Eve's phrasing when he decides to throw his lot in with hers:

... 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 or woe. (IX. 913–16)

Yet the symmetry directs our attention to a radical contrast between woman and man. Adam wants to be with Eve; Eve wants Adam to be hers alone. This is a somewhat ambiguous tack for Milton to take, since (as Speght and Lanyer would have recognized) it makes Adam more consciously aware of the sinfulness of his actions, but it goes even further than Augustine in making Eve's sins the offshoot of a far baser desire. She shares the fruit out of jealousy, that most perverse form of affection.

Yet, even this is not the whole story of Milton's Eve, since it is she who first redirects the couple towards repentance and grace. After the fall, Adam and Eve first experience lust, and following a rather hasty episode of impassioned sexual intercourse, begin to feel shame. Now newly affected by "high Passions, Anger, Hate, /Mistrust, Suspicion, Discord" (IX. 1123–24), the pair falls to "mutual accusation" with "neither self-condemning" (IX. 1187–88). It might seem surprising, given what we've seen so far, that Milton's story has Eve break this accusatory deadlock. In Book X, it is she who finally falls before Adam and begs for mercy, grasping his knees in a classical trope that goes back to Homeric scenes of supplication (Whittington 2016, p. 179). It is also she who first entertains the possibility of sacrificing herself for the sake of the other, and by doing so anticipates the more effectual sacrifice of Christ:

... both have sin'd, but thou
Against God onely, I against God and thee,
And to the place of judgment 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 onely just object of his ire. (X. 930–36)

It is this offer that causes Adam to relent, and that gives him the idea that God, too, might be moved to mercy by a genuine show of remorse. This narrative turn, to a great degree, blunts the edge of the poem's earlier acerbically antifeminist representations of Eve. She may have been the first and the worst sinner, but she also performs the first moral act after sin has entered the world. In doing so, she also proves that, even now, humankind has not entirely lost its freedom, and can resist the destructive power of the fallen passions. Having said all that, it remains the case that Eve's impressive moral initiative is thoroughly appropriated into a "softer" account of patriarchal hierarchy, re-establishing her place at the bottom of a mediated trajectory of ascent. Eve repents to Adam, and only then can both, under Adam's leadership, offer their "hearts contrite, in sign/Of sorrow unfeign'd" (X. 1104–5) up to God. It is thus only because the authority structure of the domestic institution, marriage, is restored, that Adam can freely come before God, occupying once again his "public" archetypal role as a representative of the entire human race.

5. Two Concepts of Liberty

Book XI of *Paradise Lost* begins with the Son of God interceding on behalf of the repentant couple, and the Father accepts this repentance, but he "declares that they must no longer abide in Paradise" (IX. "Argument"). The remainder of the final books is taken up by a second angelic visitation, from the archangel Michael, who provides a radically compressed and rather grim account of human history. Like Lanyer's poem, Milton's thus connects the story of Eve's fall both to the Christian story of salvation, and to its sociopolitical implications for the author's present. Generally speaking, the archangel's prophesy is fairly pessimistic about the trajectory human institutions will take. Not only will human life be harried by the "many shapes/Of Death" (XI. 467–68), but also by manifold forms of despotism and tyranny: "Since hee [mankind] permits/Within himself unworthie Powers to reign/Over free Reason, God in Judgement just/Subjects him from without to violent Lords" (XII. 90–94). Surprisingly, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ have a rather underwhelming effect on the depressing course of history. Certainly, the promise of Christ's eventual restoration of creation, when "the Earth/Shall all be Paradise" (XII. 463–64) fills Adam with hope. He even wonders whether it might have been a good thing that he sinned, "that much more good thereof shall spring" (XII. 476). However, when it comes to the meantime of secular history, even the descent of the Holy Spirit does not fundamentally change the human inclination to violence and injustice. The Church itself is quickly corrupted by "greivous Wolves" (XII. 508) so that only a select few "in the worship persevere/Of Spirit and Truth" (XII. 532–33). "So shall the World goe on," Michael concludes, "To good malignant, to bad men benigne, /Under her own waight groaning" until at last Christ appears "to dissolve/*Satan* with his perverted World" (XII. 546–47).

Yet there remains for Milton, even within the ghastly cycle of the saeculum, a significant consolation offered to humankind: the ability of the faithful to anticipate the future universal paradise with an interior version of the same. As his final exhortation, Michael tells Adam that if he can learn to obey God, and order his life according to the principals of virtue,

... then wilt thou not be loath
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A Paradise within thee, happier farr. (XII. 585–87)

When Milton wrote these lines, he had lived to see the total failure of his political ambitions. Once the Latin Secretary for the English Republican government, he had seen the regime he'd thrown his support behind collapse, and then watched as the English people crawled back like servile dogs to monarchy and an episcopal church polity. It is not surprising, therefore, that Milton seems disaffected with grand political projects, focussing instead on the more modest project of self-rule. Yet Milton's notion of a "paradise within" is also, of course, consummately political, since it implicitly presents the free individual as the base unit of society. In Milton's imagination, the political and religious arrangements we make with others are secondary to our existence as singular monarchs of our own interior

kingdoms, subject to God alone. This is a profoundly leveling vision of human society, in which neither class nor community has a primary claim on our identity.

The one exception to this, as we've seen, is woman. She remains subject to the strictures of marriage and the domestic family structure, the one hierarchical institution Milton treats as inherent to the human constitution. For Milton, in fact, the paradoxical place woman occupies, as a kind of second-order subject, actually grounds to a significant degree the autonomy of men. There is a parallel construction, to put it another way, between the inviolable privacy of male interiority and the domestic sphere of the marriage. The proper, hierarchical ordering of the former under the powers of reason is concretely manifest in the latter, where the man rules over the woman. This is a connection hammered home in *Paradise Lost*, where Eve is the last character to speak. Her final lines restore her to a pattern of willing submission to the mediating power of Adam. As the two depart paradise, she tells her husband:

... but now lead on;
 In mee is no delay; with thee to goe,
 Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,
 Is to go hence unwilling; thou to mee,
 Art all things under Heav'n, all places thou,
 Who for my wilful crime art banisht hence. (XII. 614–19)

If Adam can carry a "paradise within" wherever he goes, Eve pursues that inner Eden in and through Adam. And her restorative role in the Christian history of salvation is tied closely to that more traditionally understood function of marriage, the bringing forth of children. It is only in this capacity that Eve can fulfil the promise of Genesis 3:15 (that her seed will crush the serpent's head), and it is in this purpose that she finds her deepest comfort:

This further consolation yet secure,
 I carry hence; though all by mee is lost,
 Such favour I unworthie am voutsaft,
 By mee the Promis'd Seed shall all restore. (XII. 620–23)

In Lanyer's poetic vision, in contrast, it is precisely the mediated status of woman that is the problem. Not only is this notion of gendered subordination, according to her, an unjustified imposition of those who stand equal before God, it is scripturally untenable. The record of men's behaviour in the Bible, from the garden onwards, simply does not provide any basis for their continued authority over women. One suspects that if Lanyer could have read *Paradise Lost*, she likely would have responded something like Mary Astell, the late seventeenth-century protofeminist writer, who wryly addressed the irony of Milton's anti-monarchical politics: "How much soever Arbitrary Power may be dislik'd on a Throne, not Milton himself would cry up Liberty to poor Female Slaves, or plead for the Lawfulness of Resisting a Private Tyranny" (Astell 1706, p. 27). Astell's use of the adjective "private" here is telling, as it is precisely this aspect of gender hierarchy that distinguishes it, in Milton's imagination, from the "public" subordination of men in the political sphere.

Lanyer's call for the restoration of women's "Libertie," it must be said, is pointedly silent on practical politics. It frames its dispute in spiritual terms, and its only explicit argument is against the mediated status of women in spiritual matters. It conscientiously avoids giving an account of what this newfound liberty would entail, as doing so would clearly make the text more controversial than it already was. But it is important for Lanyer that her call to liberty does not share the class-leveling implications that Milton's does. Her status as a commoner writing for an elite female audience necessitated her deference to her social superiors, hence the many prefaces to noble women that precede the main poem. So it is that, at the very climax of her passion narrative, just after Christ has succumbed to death on the cross, Lanyer directly addresses her patron, the Dowager Countess of Cumberland, Margaret Clifford. In a manner that resembles the discourse given by the

archangel Michael to Adam, Lanyer turns to Clifford as a kind of archetypal authority, somehow making her representative of womankind:

This with the eie of Faith thou maist behold,
Deere Spouse of Christ, and more than I can write;
And here both Griefe and Joy thou maist unfold,
To view thy Love in this most heavy plight,
Bowng his head, his bloodlesse body cold. (ll. 1169–73)

In naming Clifford the “spouse of Christ” Lanyer constructs her as exemplifying exactly the kind of direct-with-God relationship her poem has been arguing for. The only marriage that really matters is the spiritual one between believer and Christ (according to which all humans are feminine). At the same time, though, Lanyer spiritualizes and thus “naturalizes” the class hierarchies of the Jacobean court; Lanyer has to mediate her approach to Christ not through her own eyes of faith, but through those of her patron. Much like Milton does with gendered authority, Lanyer obfuscates the arbitrariness of the Dowager’s courtly authority by treating it as the natural result of her ethical superiority. Money and status, Lanyer tells the Countess, have nothing to do with it: “All wealth and honour thou do’st quite reject, /If thou perceiv’st that once it prooves a foe/To virtue, learning, and the powres diuine” (ll. 1389–91). Like Adam’s “manly grace” in *Paradise Lost*, Clifford’s “faire virtues” (l. 1372) are presented as the obvious ground of her status as mediator between women and God.

Lanyer’s hierarchies, of course, come from a very different place than Milton’s. She writes from a position of profound vulnerability, both as a “Woma[n] writing of divinest things” (“To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie,” l. 4) and as a commoner hoping to secure a tenuous economic stability within the networks of the Jacobean court. Milton writes in response to a very different sense of vulnerability. His is the posture of the political failure attempting to imagine an account of individual freedom and appropriate self-rule within a nation that has given itself over to (in his view) a regressive hegemony. The ideal rule of the husband over the private household, even as it stands outside the public sphere of male political equality, nevertheless provides a kind of compensation for the unjust subjection men face in the world of realpolitik. In their respective opposition to what each sees as the oppressive structure of hierarchy, though, and in their shared desire for unmediated access of the believer to God, Lanyer and Milton both take up a striking middle position in the development of what philosopher Charles Taylor has called a “direct-access society.” As Taylor describes it, one of the most significant novelties of modernity involved a shift “from a hierarchical order of personalized links to an impersonal egalitarian one” (Taylor 2007, p. 209). Conceptually, this involves a reorientation of how each person understands his or her relation to society as a whole. In the older, “vertical” model, “one belonged to . . . society by belonging to some component of it.” One’s fealty to a lord, membership in a guild, communion within a local parish, or some such other form of belonging mediated one’s access to the public sphere and to the state. In a direct-access society, in contrast, one’s “fundamental way of belonging is not dependent on, or mediated by any of these other belongings” (ibid., p. 210).

In Milton’s and Lanyer’s imaginative worlds, the direct access each desires appears as principally religious, but it is literary and political as well. Literarily, both authors move from a deeply Protestant insistence on unmediated interpretative access to scripture, to a more radical sense that their own writings emerge from direct communication with God. Both Lanyer and Milton present their work as inspired by a divine muse, the Holy Spirit himself.¹¹ They thus take on a prophetic mantle, treating their works as more than Christian attempts at midrash, aspiring instead, especially in Milton’s case, to something like the status of scripture. In both cases, too, acquiring unmediated access to God necessitates a vigorous critique of institutions that insist on the mediacy of access to political and moral self-expression. For Milton, these are non-democratic political forms and social hierarchies; for Lanyer, it is the subordinating power of patriarchy, particularly within marriage, that is most oppressive. Yet if both authors seem to be moving part way towards a modern form

of bourgeois liberal individualism, the fact that neither can jettison ordered structures of hierarchical mediation altogether might give us pause. Both Lanyer and Milton might, in fact, provide a chastening reminder of the challenges involved in imaging human liberty, and of the tensions between our desire for belonging and our yearnings for freedom.

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Notes

- ¹ All biblical quotations come from the Oxford World Classics edition of the Authorized Version (Carroll and Prickett 1997).
- ² Quotations of *Paradise Lost* come from (Luxon 2022) and will be given parenthetically (book. line numbers) in the text. Citations of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* come from (Lanyer 1993).
- ³ Knox was a Protestant reformer and a Genevan exile during Mary's reign, and it is a comical bit of historical bad luck that he published his treatise in the very year that Queen Elizabeth ascended to the throne. Though he had not specifically had her in mind, his pamphlet deeply offended her, and he was forbidden to return to England or travel through it even as many other Protestant exiles were being welcomed into the country.
- ⁴ As Miller also points out, Lanyer's influence on Milton may have been direct, as there are several "possible avenues through which Milton could have gained access to Lanyer's poem" (Miller 2012, p. 167).
- ⁵ In Southwell's poem, the lines below are spoken in the voice of St. Peter, following the episode with the servant girl:
 O women, woe to men: traps for their falls,
 Still actors in all tragicall mischaunces:
 Earth's necessarie evils, captiving thralles,
 Now murdring with your tongs, now with your glances,
 Parents of life, and love: spoylers of both.
 The theeves of Harts, false do you love or loth. (ll. 319–24)
- ⁶ See Milton's *Of Reformation*. For Milton, all those insisting on a mandated structure of worship and authority "draw downe all the Divine intercourses, betwixt God, and the Soule, yea, the very shape of God himselfe, into an exterior, and bodily forme" (Milton 1998, p. 876).
- ⁷ My thanks to Nicki Ross for this phrasing.
- ⁸ See (McColley 1983) for a book-length unpacking of this argument. McColley makes a famous, but overly optimistic, feminist defence of Milton's poem in this book, arguing that Milton cannot really be misogynistic since misogyny necessarily undermines his theodicy. The weakness of the book's argument comes from the fact that it assumes Milton's goals in the poem are consistent with each other.
- ⁹ For just a few examples of works, not cited elsewhere in this essay, that engage in this debate, see (Wittreich 1987; Walker 1989; Froula 1983; Green 2009; Eggert 2000, especially pp. 169–200; and Miller 2008), among many others.
- ¹⁰ Mary Nyquist makes a similar point when she argues that "the story Eve tells stresses with remarkable persistence both the difficulty and the importance of Eve's 'voluntarily' espousing herself to Adam" (Nyquist 1987, p. 122).
- ¹¹ Cf. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* ll. pp. 297–302 with *Paradise Lost* I. pp. 17–26:

Lanyer: Therefore I humbly for his Grace will pray, That he will give me Power and Strength to Write, That what I haue begun, so end I may, As his great Glory may appeare more bright; Yea in these Lines I may no further stray, Than his most holy Spirit shall giue me Light:	Milton: And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer Before all Temples th'upright heart and pure, Instruct me, What in me is dark Illumin, what is low raise and support; That to the highth of this great Argument I may assert Eternal Providence, And justifie the wayes of God to men.
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