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“Thou art exact of taste”: The *Ars Amatoria* as Intertext in *Paradise Lost*

M. L. STAPLETON

a kind loving fool, and one that you may govern, makes no ill husband.

(Thomas Killigrew, *The Parson's Wedding* 1.2)

Being as I am, why didst not thou the Head
Command me absolutely not to go,
Going into such danger as thou said'st?

(John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 9.1155–157)

cogis adulterium dando tempusque locumque;
quid, nisi consilio est usa puella tuo?

(Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 2.367–68)

[you compel adultery by giving both time and place; why, except that the woman has used your counsel?]¹

It is difficult to imagine a more unlikely troika of authors than a libertine playwright and intimate of Charles II, a rabid defender of Cromwell and regicide, and Publius Ovidius Naso, who failed to convince his emperor that his muse was jocund though his life was chaste.² Killigrew could not have been pleased by Milton's justification of the regicides, *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*, intemperately composed and published as General Monck entered London. If the theater-loving Milton could have heard the following challenge of Killigrew's Mrs. Wanton to a bevy of rakes, he may well have regained, through sheer anger, the light he had spent: “And were you wise men, and true Lovers of liberty, now were the time to bring wenching to that perfection no age could ever have hoped; now you may sow such seed of pleasure, you may be

prayed for hereafter" (*The Parson's Wedding* 4.1). And Ovid exemplifies the dangers of offending one's monarch by writing a poetical treatise that instructs men and women how to sow the seeds of pleasure. Yet these three poets of exile meditate and write obsessively about gender and marriage, sometimes in strikingly interrelated ways.³ In the passages above, Killigrew's *Widow Wild* catechizes her niece Mrs. Pleasant and the aptly-named Mrs. Wanton about the importance of retaining the desired superior marital position. Milton's pleasant and wanton Eve uses the wild logic of the newly fallen to regain the superior position she has just relinquished by sharing the fruit with Adam. She chastises him because his awareness of her inferiority should have made him deny her the liberty she demanded, to risk undergoing temptation. With logic equally maddening, Ovid warns men that a failure to be vigilant not only invites but compels women to usurp the masculine prerogative. Clearly, Menelaus bears the responsibility for Helen's adultery because he provides her with the opportunity to succumb to Paris' blandishments. Helen, Eve, Pleasant, Wanton, and Wild often engage in manipulative and deceptive behavior to satisfy their dangerous desires to acquire freedom and attain superiority. One must be vigilant, indeed. I make these connections to suggest that Milton, jocund and chaste, uses an unlikely tool to respond to those adherents of a libertine ethos from whom he truly wished to exile himself, the lovers of a liberty that he had not envisioned in *Areopagitica*. Ovid's *Ars amatoria* informs the conception of *Paradise Lost*.

As recent commentators have demonstrated, Milton's poetics depend heavily on those of his antique predecessors, especially Ovid. The *Index* to Frank A. Patterson's *Columbia* edition of the works lists over three hundred allusions on four double-columned pages in eight-point type. They testify to a surprising affinity, one that we would not expect from the Milton and Ovid we have invented.⁴ The three major commentators on Milton's use of Ovid demonstrate the debt of *Paradise Lost* to the *Metamorphoses* in various kinds of detail, from simple allusion to complete ingestion and reconfiguration.⁵ I argue, however, that these same distinguished scholars may be mistaken in suggesting that Milton did not use other parts of the Ovidian corpus significantly in his epic. In this, they may be taking their cues from Patterson, whose *Index* lists a mere nine gleanings from the *Ars amatoria* and eleven from the *Amores*, most of them mere verbal echoes in the Latin juvenilia, some highly dubious. Richard DuRocher, for one, takes Milton's famous "retraction" (in the manner of Dante, Petrarch, Chaucer, and the Roman elegists) appended to the end of *Elegy VII* at face value: "Haec ego mente olim laeva, studioque supino / Nequitiae posui vana trophaea meae" [I once built

these vain monuments to my lust with a perverted zeal and an idle intent] (1–2).⁶ Yet, just as with all such slippery repudiations, the author undermines the sincerity of his intentions by lovingly preserving the very works that he intends to excuse. Not even the Lady of Christ's can claim to have expunged these natural tendencies without creating the impression of protesting too much. And, if Milton's agenda did not allow him to continue writing amatory elegy or poetry that depended heavily on it, its language and conventions never left him.⁷ His fondness for "the smooth Elegiack Poets, whereof the Schooles are not scarce," is clear in *An Apology for Smectymnuus*: "Whom both for the pleasing sound of their numerous writing, which in imitation I found most easie; and most agreeable to natures part in me, and for their matter which what it is, there be few who know not, I was so allur'd to read, that no recreation came to me better welcome" (CPW 1: 889–90).⁸ The noun in the last clause may carry the sense of "refashioning" as well as "pleasant diversion."

As its strange twinning with Killigrew's comedy denotes, *Paradise Lost* is a Restoration-era (if not "Restoration") poem, written, published, revised, and republished during this time.⁹ Contemporary scholarship documents its participation in several important discourses of the period; I argue that Milton uses the *Ars amatoria* as a formative intertext in his epic to demonize libertinism, an issue in Carolean society.¹⁰ He may not have mentioned the term and its variants in his poem (no vain monument to lust), but he certainly knew what a libertine was. He deploys the word in his prose works as political-religious slander or insult, much as congressmen bedaubed their enemies with "communist" in mid-twentieth-century America. And, ironically, Milton himself was widely accused of this tendency in all three senses (heretic, freethinker, satyr) because of his divorce tracts, as Christopher Hill and James Grantham Turner explain so well.¹¹ In spite of his indignation at this apparent slander, Ovidian libertinism surfaces in Milton's poetry from the beginning and courses through *Paradise Lost*. Satan uses the language of seduction and depraved sexuality with the rebel angels, Sin, and, of course, "much deceiv'd, much failing, hapless *Eve*" (*Paradise Lost* 9.404). Milton's asides during his celebration of prelapsarian sexuality in Eden clarify his conceptions about these sons of Belial (flown with insolence and wine)¹² such as Mr. Dorimant, of whom Mrs. Loveit approves: "I know he is a devil, but he has something of the angel yet undefaced in him, which makes him so charming and agreeable, that I must love him be he never so wicked" (*The Man of Mode* 2.2.17–20).¹³ In this, she evokes Milton's attitude towards the amatory Ovid, whose *Ars amatoria* mostly likely occupied a place in his library.¹⁴

I

fallite fallentes; ex magna parte profanum
 sunt genus: in laqueos, quos posuere, cadant.
 (*Ars amatoria* 1.645–46)

[deceive the deceivers; for the most part they are a bad sort;
 let them blunder into the same snares that they have laid.]

Who ever by consulting at thy shrine
 Return'd the wiser, or the more instruct
 To fly or follow what concern'd him most,
 And run not sooner to his fatal snare?
 (*Paradise Regained* 1.431–41)

to all men such books are not temptations, nor vanities; but
 usefull drugs and materialls wherewith to temper and com-
 pose effective and strong med'cins, which mans life cannot
 want.

(*Areopagitica* [CPW 2: 521])

With this distich, the *praeceptor* explains what it means to be the master of love. Milton, who consulted at his shrine frequently, makes the Son chastise Satan in the brief epic for his reliance on Ovidian snares. Yet, like Dante before him, Milton cannot disclaim the *auctor* in spite of his profane qualities. Finding Ovid too useful to repudiate, he leaves those of us who read him with an icy disclaimer: “Banish all objects of lust, shut up all youth into the severest discipline that can be exercis'd in any hermitage, ye cannot make them chaste, that came not thither so” (*Areopagitica* [CPW 2: 527]). In this, Milton shares an ambiguous attitude with many poets in the Christian west who borrow from Ovid. The *praeceptor Amoris* himself invites readerly vexation and causes his imitators to duplicate it. For example, the notorious hunting metaphor so often evoked in medieval love poetry champions the snare: “scit bene uenator, ceruis ubi retia tendat” [the hunter knows well where he may spread his nets for the stag] (*Ars amatoria* 1.45). However, Ovid’s vignette of Venus and Mars thrashing away in Vulcan’s trap, inextricably and publicly in *flagrante delicto*, would seem to admonish us of the danger of nets: “impliciti laqueis nudus uterque iacent” [the two lie naked trapped in the snare] (2.580). Yet Ovid’s sententious conclusion to the episode makes a crooked circle. It suggests that the *retia* pose less danger to adulterers than to cuckolded husbands who hurt their societal status by revealing

their horns: “hoc uetiti uos este; uetat deprensa Dione / insidias illas, quas tulit ipsa, dare” [beware of this: Dione’s detection warns that you not set those snares that she endured] (2.593–94). Ovid still champions the *venator*.¹⁵ Better to hide one’s devices than to dispose of them altogether: “nouus uiso casse resistet amans” [with the net in sight, the new lover will resist] (3.554).

Milton’s theology cannot allow him to approve of the dynamic of pursuit, leading as it does to jealousy, the injured lover’s hell, but he seems equally adamant in his refusal to deny its existence, demonstrating it as the Manichean aesthetic of *Paradise Lost* dictates. Eve-Daphne recounts her future mate’s initial Apollonian approach: “back I turn’d, / Thou following cri’d’st aloud, Return fair Eve, / Whom fli’st thou?” (4.480–82). Milton evokes the comic nature of the sun god’s frustrated quest in *Metamorphoses* 1 without his egotism. He also suggests, in the manner of the *praeceptor*, that if women do not always harden into laurel trees in response to the lewd rake or dressed fopling, neither do they always acquiesce to the persuasion of a kind and reasonable swain. Yet, in this case, Milton does not imply that Adam requires an *Ars amatoria* in his temperate reconfiguration of that useful drug. He allows the woman to recount the chase and its aftermath—without a net, so to speak. (How many anguished cavalier and courtly lyrics bewail the day unseized?) This appears to be Milton’s way of exorcising the demonic nature of the hunt, one horribly revealed by another female being, Sin:

I fled, but he pursu’d (though more, it seems,
 Inflam’d with lust than rage) and swifter far,
 Mee overtook his mother all dismay’d,
 And in embraces forcible and foul
 Ingend’ring with me, of that rape’begot
 These yelling Monsters

(2.790–95)

In this supreme instance of brutality without persuasion, Milton demonstrates the lowest common denominator of Ovidian pursuit. (How many voiceless addressees of the aforementioned lyrics feared that the seizure of the day would necessitate such an outcome?) Yet eventually, fallen Eve, using her bland words at will to complement the excuse in her face, captures Adam in her strong toils of grace, she who “for thee ordain’d / A help, became thy snare” (11.164–65), a reincarnation of the nameless *puellae* of the Latin poetry: “Et decus eximium frontis, tremulosque capillos, / Aurea quae fallax retia tendit Amor” [and a brow of exquisite

beauty, golden snares that Cupid the deceiver held out] (*Elegy I*. 59–60). The *praeceptor* champions hunting by explaining the danger of nets, not for the wise but for the foolish hunter. Milton, like that Belial Lord Rochester after him, explains that amatory venery and its pratfalls are the consequence of sin. Women seem especially “Skill’d to retire, and in retiring draw / Hearts after them tangl’d in Amorous Nets” (*Paradise Regained* 2.161–62). Since enjoyment no longer waits upon desire, the foolish necessity of hunting is predestined to become a disaster for the *venator*, be his quarry Daphne, Mary Powell, or Eve, who “too like” Pandora, “ensnar’d / Mankind with her fair looks” (*Paradise Lost* 4.715, 717–18). One could even say that the Father plays Vulcan as his couple ends up in his predestined nets, “unlike / To that first naked Glory” (9.1114–115). Milton reconfigures his predecessor’s handbook of seduction as a meditation on the origin of the gulf between the sexes. In his similarly crooked (if corrective) circle, he justifies that the way of the *praeceptor* is the pattern of fallen man.

As Milton probably noted, the *magister Amoris* concludes his first book to the young men of Rome by admonishing them that the most successful lover mimics the changeable sea god Proteus to ensure the seduction of those (i.e., women) who would otherwise deceive, and so deserve what they get: “fallite fallentes.” Ovid’s favorite god provides him with his emblem as poet, varying his voices and moods from genre to genre, poem to poem, and line to line:

pectoribus mores tot sunt, quot in ore figurae;
 qui sapit, innumeris moribus aptus erit,
 utque leues Proteus modo se tenuabit in undas,
 Nunc leo, nunc arbor, nunc erit hirtus aper.
 (*Ars amatoria* 1.759–62)

[there are as many fashions in hearts as there are expressions in the face; he who is wise will adapt himself to innumerable fashions, and like Proteus will turn himself into swift waves, now a lion, now a tree, now a shaggy boar.]

This divine presence underlies all of the verbal and sexual manipulation in the *Ars*. Milton’s nature is similarly slippery, as Stanley Fish and others remind us.¹⁶ As he evokes the “Philosophers” or alchemists who “call up unbound / In various shapes old *Proteus* from the Sea, / Drain’d through a Limbec to his Native form” (*Paradise Lost* 3.603–05), he portrays him-

self more accurately, perhaps, than in the example Dr. Johnson hands down to us.¹⁷

Milton has no native form, drain him as we may through our critical limbecs. Accordingly, he transmutes his authorial Proteanism to his most notorious (and well-drawn) character. Although such changes may owe more to the *Metamorphoses* Ovid at first glance, Satan's use of his variable nature for the purposes of seduction aligns him more firmly with the *Ars*. Taking on different forms is, as Milton stresses early in his epic, the business of all spirits, who "when they please / Can either Sex assume, or both" (1.423–24). Yet it is the necessity of the fallen, like Satan, who "casts to change his proper shape, / Which else might work him danger or delay" (3.634–35). In fact, with the exception of his cherubic persona (3.636), the variations are from the animal kingdom: cormorant (4.196), toad (4.800), and serpent (9.187–88), "Fit Vessel, fittest Imp of fraud" (9.89–91). This may ally him with the element that wedded love is intended to expunge, "adulterous lust," which was "driv'n from men / Among the bestial herds to range" (4.753–54). He seems to be following the advice of the master. Even in an animal simile (rather than in an actual transformation), his movements recall the *Ars* as he, "like a proud Steed rein'd, went haughty on, / Champing his iron curb" (4.858–59); "frenaque magnanimi dente teruntur equi" [and the proud steed champs the bridle with his teeth] (*Ars amatoria* 1.20). Satan's serpentine form symbolizes all of his changes, and underscores the concept that such variation is suspect, evil, something that the Father believes of the anguished Adam *in extremis*: "His heart I know, how variable and vain / Self-left" (11.92–93). Perhaps He believes, with the *praeceptor*, that such deceivers deserve to be deceived. Satan's very motions bespeak his Proteanism and predict its consequences as he leads hapless Eve to the Tree: "Hee leading swiftly roll'd / In tangles, and made intricate seem straight, / To mischief swift" (9.631–33). Intricacy is dangerous to the unfallen; against it she will have no defense, just as the innumerable *puellae* of Rome, hopes the *praeceptor*, can erect no battlements against their subtle enemy. Milton knew well the importance of a benign exterior. His "Artificer of fraud," a truly rakish demon, "Each perturbation smooth'd with outward calm" (4.120–21) to perpetuate further knavery.

Protean Milton implies that the unfallen cannot defend themselves against such knavery, a truth that raises the usual questions of the type that William Empson stated so elegantly at mid-century.¹⁸ What spiritual artillery could the human pair hope to draw against their foe without the knowledge of guile? As Aemilia Lanyer says of Eve, "That undiscerning

Ignorance perceav'd / No guile, or craft that was by him intended" (*Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* 769–70).¹⁹ And in places, Milton would seem to agree: "neither Man nor Angel can discern / Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks / Invisible, except to God alone" (*Paradise Lost* 3.682–84). Satan can even fool Uriel, one of seven archangels who are the Father's "Eyes / That run through all the Heav'ns" (3.650–51). Only one angel among the soon-to-be damned, Abdiel, can withstand him "unmov'd, / Unshak'n, uneduc'd, unterrifi'd" (5.898–99). How difficult it must be, then, for human beings to remain unmoved. If "Man will heark'n to his glozing lies" (3.93), it seems that Milton's Arminian God predestines seduction; to be seduced is to be fallen. In the rhetorical mimesis of Satan's physical and psychological intricacy, he delays his request for information from Uriel concerning Earth's location until fourteen lines into his speech as if it were a trifle (3.667–68). Newly-fallen Eve will imitate Satan when it takes nineteen lines for her to admit her disobedience, Milton's nicely enjambed "that I / Have also tasted" (9.874) doubling the idea that she intends to make this crucial bit of data seem an afterthought. Only the damned must hide their agendas and then reveal the consequences of performing them as a means of evading full responsibility: "qui modo celabas monitu tua crimina nostro, / flecte iter et monitu detege furta meo" [you who, by my advice, formerly concealed your crimes, change the path by my advice and reveal your deceit] (*Ars amatoria* 2.427–28). One cannot be much more Protean than this. Ultimately, the *praeceptor Amoris* hopes that the uninitiated prove easy prey for his model seducer who bears his imprimatur: "sed, quicumque meo superarit Amazona ferro, / inscribat spoliis NASO MAGISTER ERAT" [but whoever may conquer Amazons with my sword, let him inscribe OVID WAS MY MASTER on his spoils] (*Ars amatoria* 2.743–44). Eve's seductive rhetoric is Satan's sword; she and Adam, spoils indeed, bear his imprimatur. His guilt concerning the fallen angels, "whom I seduc'd / With other promises and other vaunts / Than to submit" (4.81–85), dissipates nicely when the time arrives to seduce the happy pair.

II

That hath been thy craft,
 By mixing somewhat true to vent more lies.
 But what have been thy answers, what but dark,
 Ambiguous and with double sense deluding,
 Which they who ask'd have seldom understood,
 And not well understood, as good not known?

(*Paradise Regained* 1.436–41)

Nor thou his malice and false guile contemn;
 Subtle he needs must be, who could seduce
 Angels

(*Paradise Lost* 9.306–08)

sunt qui mendaci specie grassentur amoris

(*Ars amatoria* 3.441)

[there are those who attack with the false appearance of love]

The Son exposes Satan's deceitful rhetoric, his ability to lie like the truth to vent more lies. Adam shows his appreciation of such powers in his fruitless warning to a determined Eve, even though he has not yet been (and is never directly) exposed to them. In his own speech, the *praeceptor* enacts Satan's paradigm as he deludes women with double sense, pretending to warn them about men who would confuse them with dark and ambiguous answers, the very *feminae* he has been encouraging men to seduce all along. Rhetoric, then, demonstrates the power of the fallen, the ability to persuade for the sake of vice, the epitome of libertinism. The author of "The Emulation: A Pindarick Ode" (1683), who identifies herself as "a Young Lady," makes this equation specifically through conjunctive alliteration about men in her time, they who "Must be debauch'd and damn'd to get / The Reputation of a Wit" (84–85; my emphasis)—the adjectives also yoking the rake and Satan, casual fruition and hell, with eloquence as a caul.²⁰ As Milton notes, even the strange beauty of the music of hell is irresistible: "For Eloquence the Soul, Song charms the Sense" (*Paradise Lost* 2.556). Harmful Ovidian eloquence triumphs in *Paradise Lost*, especially when the newly-seduced Eve adopts Satanic verbiage as she addresses the fruit, loverlike, before she eats it: "his forbidding / Commends thee more" (9.753–54), language she will use as she turns vampire with Adam. Eve, as if she were a female rakehell such as the title character in Thomas D'Urfey's *Madam Fickle* (1676), now knows that love and deception interpenetrate, just as the *praeceptor* implies in his advice that one prowl the theaters for prey: "illic inuenies quod ames, quod ludere possis" [there you will find one you may love, one you may deceive] (*Ars amatoria* 1.91).

Milton's descriptions of Belial, "after *Asmodai* / The fleshliest Incubus" (*Paradise Regained* 2.151–52), double and shadow Satan's rhetoric of the demonically seductive. In the way that he loves "Vice for itself" (*Paradise Lost* 1.492), he proves roughly equivalent to the *praeceptor amoris*: "si latet, ars prodest" [art is useful if it is hidden] (*Ars amatoria* 2.313). Satan's approving sneer to him, "In Courts and Regal Chambers how thou lurk'st"

(*Paradise Regained* 2.183), implies that Belial, flown in insolence with his sons, embodies such demonic *sententiae* in his ability to lurk. However, he distinguishes himself with words:

all was false and hollow; though his Tongue
Dropt Manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest Counsels: for his thoughts were low;
To vice industrious, but to Nobler deeds
Timorous and slothful: yet he pleas'd the ear
(Paradise Lost 2.112–17)

As Ovid puts it, no one enjoys listening to curmudgeonry or threats, and “ut ameris, amabilis esto” [so that you would be loved, be loveable] (*Ars amatoria* 2.107). Belial’s skill in charming his auditors foretells all other ear-pleasing for ignoble reasons. Yet Satan and Eve also proceed “with words cloth’d in reason’s garb” (2.226) against their prey, something that cannot always be said of the fleshly incubus. Belial’s erroneous belief that all others share his taste for depravity leads him to suggest that the Son would surely be susceptible to the charms of women, and this receives Satan’s scorn: “in much uneven scale thou weigh’st / All others by thyself” (*Paradise Regained* 2.173–74). The senior devil’s correction of his fellow not only demonstrates his inferiority in the art of libertinism but also critiques the *ars* of the *praeceptor* himself, he of industrious vice. In a strange way, Satan speaks for Milton against Ovid, whose master of love claims: “nil nisi lasciuui per me discuntur amores: / femina praecipiam quo sit amanda modo” [none except lascivious loves can be learned through me: I will teach in what way a woman ought to be loved] (*Ars amatoria* 3.27–28). Surely there are better ways, Milton hopes, than such “pleasing sorcery” (*Paradise Lost* 2.566) as Hell can provide.

Rhetorical dubiety may be even more essential to *Paradise Lost* than to Ovid’s *magister*. In his innocent state, Adam hopes that language can be “freed from intricacies” (9.182). But this is impossible, even in Eden and in Heaven. Intricacy informs the very movements of the serpent with hellish rancor imminent; the Father’s strange overjustification of his plan (3.80–134); Adam’s truly masterful bargaining with the Almighty to create an Eve for him (8.357–451); and in a paradoxical cliché that the poem enacts: those we trust and love can harm us most. Indeed, the *praeceptor* urges us to gull those whom we know, “tuta frequensque uia est, per amici fallere nomen” [it is the safe and easy way to deceive under the name of friend] (*Ars amatoria* 1.585). *Amici*, in the *Ars*, can include

husbands and wives. Upon her fall, beguiling *amica* Eve contemplates, for the first time, which face to prepare so that she may beguile: “But to Adam in what sort / Shall I appear?” (*Paradise Lost* 9.816–17). She duplicates Satan’s Proteanism in her ensnaring rhetoric:

For bliss, as thou hast part, to me is bliss,
Tedious, unshar’d with thee, and odious soon.
Thou therefore also taste.
(9.879–81)

Such syntactical flowers bloom before helpless Adam, nicely ensconced in dependent clauses in the first two lines, the bluntness of the actual agenda left for the end with “Thou” and “taste” subtly separated by the adverb and conjunction that bind the sinless and the sinning. He never has a chance. Again, however, intricacies like these are not merely the stuff of postlapsarian states. Milton intimates that Heaven provides as much pleasing sorcery as Hell, leaving us with the picture of a dumbstruck Adam that explains what it would be like to listen to an angel. Raphael “in Adam’s Ear / So Charming left his voice, that he a while / Thought him still speaking, still stood fixt to hear” (8.1–3). The affable archangel, like Belial, Satan, and Eve, would be loved by being loveable. So, it appears, would Adam, who, Eve knew in their prelapsarian state,

would intermix
Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute
With conjugal caresses, from his Lip
Not Words alone pleas’d her.
(8.54–57)

Eve, one might presume, was the grateful one (academic subjects can be tedious), although one might equally wonder who did the disputing, whether Adam simply wished to stop her mouth with foreplay, and if Eve were not equally pleased that her mate could not lecture and kiss at the same time. Milton, perhaps playing with Ovid here, dramatizes a question of the *praeceptor*: “quis sapiens blandis non misceat oscula uerbis?” [what wise person would not mingle kisses with enticing words?] (*Ars amatoria* 1.663). Who indeed? Words aid motion and motion aids words, both of them nourishing love: “dulcibus est uerbis mollis alendus amor” (2.152). Wise Adam may have read his *Ars amatoria* after all; in this case, wiser Eve must have been glad that he did. This exemplifies Milton’s better way.

So Ovidian *mores* and rhetoric occupy both sides of the Fall, yet Milton fashions Satan as the chief purveyor of these entities. At one point, his creator describes him through simile as an orator of “free Rome, where Eloquence / Flourish’d” (*Paradise Lost* 9.671–72). Since eloquence is generally harmful in the poem, the adjective suggests licentiousness and libertinism as well as the Republic before the advent of the emperors. Again, Milton habitually enacts Ovidian *sententiae* in the words and movements of his characters; Satan’s manipulations and seductions suggest that Milton makes him the chief recipient of such intertextual transmissions. Consider the double dubiety of the advice of the *praeceptor* to young women, patronizingly proffered under the aegis of protection, a map or guide to man and his tricks: “saepe uiri fallunt, tenerae non saepe puellae / paucaque, si quaeras, crimina fraudis habent” [men deceive often, tender young women not often, and if you would know, they rarely commit the crimes of deceit] (*Ars amatoria* 3.31–32). Such paternalistic admonishment seems less benign when we remember that the first two books of the poem encourage men to be fraudulent to women, deceivers who deserve to be deceived, an enemy to be seduced by rakehellish arts: “quas sit capienda per artes” (1.265). Milton reverses the dynamic slightly, fashioning Raphael as one who genuinely attempts to warn the happy pair against their enemy, “Who now is plotting how he may seduce / Thee also from obedience” (*Paradise Lost* 6.901–02). This, as it happens, has no more efficacy than the corrupt advice of Ovid’s speaker. The *artes* that such cautions are intended to inoculate against are simply too lethal. Even the motherless daughter Sin, the branch of all corruption, lacks sufficient guile to combat its root, the “subtle Fiend” her father, armed with the wise lover’s “lore” that enables him to defuse her anguish and hatred:

Dear Daughter, since thou claim’st me for thy Sire,
 And my fair Son here shows’t me, the dear pledge
 Of dalliance had with thee in Heav’n, and joys
 Then sweet, now sad to mention
 (2.2.815–19)

His smooth, lie-encrusted answer to gatekeeper Sin to let him leave Hell may contain an odd echo of Ovid’s advice to the male lover that he bribe his lady’s *ianitor* to ensure the clandestine meeting he seeks: “sit semper in illa / ianitor” [let the gatekeeper always be among them] (*Ars amatoria* 2.259–60). That Satan does not even remember the “dalliance” (a sex-encoded word) and thereby cannot think of its joys as sweet, does not

intend to honor any pledges and could not possibly think of his son as fair surely recalls the Ovidian proverb that the crafty one hides his words in careful ambiguities: “ambiguus callidus abde notis” (1. 490). With the *artes* of such an *amator* for Adam and Eve to combat, Raphael can have no dominion. And one cannot prevent another from being gulled.

The Ovidian assertion that all women can be deceived implies that one is quite like another. Milton’s response to such an idea is to invite us to compare Eve and Sin, since both are female beings whom Satan seduces, one psychologically and the other physically. These related actions suggest a dramatic bifurcation of the general Ovidian strategy. Of course one could argue that Eve’s entrapment is just as devastating as the horrible physical ravishing of Sin, whose mind, unlike that of her human counterpart, remains largely unchanged by that act. One could also say that Satan bewitches Eve’s senses, as well, and that Sin’s opening of the gates evidences not only a powerful sexual symbolism that duplicates her own ravishing but also a psychological submission. Still, a grave aphorism that applies to both, particularly to Grandmother Eve, is “dabit eloquio uicta puella manus” [a woman will give her hand, conquered, to eloquence] (*Ars amatoria* 1.462). Mrs. Loveit, Mrs. Pinchwife, and even Mrs. Millamant would certainly agree: “Tho’ I am upon the very Verge of Matrimony, I expect you shou’d solicit me as much as if I were wavering at the grate of a Monastery, with one foot over the threshold” (*The Way of the World* 4.1.177–80).²¹ Satan proves a willing Mirabell who solicits Milton’s pseudo-women with eloquence.

Such eloquence is, in some ways, Ovidian. A critical tradition holds that Milton demonizes the rhetoric of the pre- and post-Civil War “Courtly Amorists” in *Paradise Lost*, the libertine song-language of seduction.²² Much of this rhetoric appears specifically in Satan’s dream-brainwashing of Eve (*Paradise Lost* 5.37–92) that he repeats and solidifies during his lucky minute in Eden, sounding for all the world like Thomas Carew or Sir John Suckling: “Wonder not, sovrain Mistress, if perhaps / Thou canst, who are sole Wonder” (9.532–33). The erotic Ovid certainly slithers through the lines of these poets. In allowing Satan to adopt their poetics, Milton can discredit his literary enemies and subtly praise and parody his classical antecedent and thereby create his own myth of origin. The devil, far more lethal than Caroline or Carolean toasters and songsters, nonetheless serves as both progenitor and beneficiary of the *artes* they try. These consist of, in a word, flattery, something that a patriarchal culture paradoxically conditions women to expect and dismiss. The crafty flatterer, as Lord Chesterfield tells his son, seeks vulnerability for maximum effectiveness; there is no reason to believe that Milton did

not hold similar views.²³ Hence Satan's calibrated verbiage. He knows that Eve is insecure about her place in the hierarchy of things and elevates her with adjectives ("sovrán"; "sole") above Adam. Without guile she has no defense. If Adam's conjugal manipulations are such, Milton means them to be benign. Eve has never really been subjected to their malignant opposite before:

Full orb'd the Moon, and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain,
If none regard
(5.42–44)

Yet-sinless Eve may well fulfill Chesterfield's paradigm of the uncontested beauty, but Satan's words might also uncover the trace of innocent narcissism that she exhibits in becoming enamored of her own reflection (4.460–76).²⁴ Ovidian *loci* abound here as well. One can return yet again to the authorial seduction of the master's book of the *Ars* to women: "quod latet, ignotum est; ignoti nulla cupido" [what is hidden is unknown; no one desires what is unknown] (3.397). One can also invoke a son of Ovid's muse from Milton's own time, Waller:

Small is the worth
Of Beauty from the light retir'd;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer her self to be desir'd,
And not blush so to be admir'd.
(“Song: Go lovely Rose” 11–15)²⁵

Calculating purveyors of Court Amours insist that women allow themselves to be admired without blushing in the appraising male gaze, a cue from recircled and recycled Ovidian business: "se quoque det populo mulier speciosa uidentam" [the beautiful woman should also let herself be seen by the populace] (*Ars amatoria* 3.421). Comus implies to the Lady that seduction is much easier this way: "be not coy, and be not cozen'd / With that same vaunted name Virginity" (737–38). Yet, if Lady Mary Wroth's poetry can be taken as evidence, women in Milton's century saw through these blandishments. Her little love-god is always identified with the seducing male:

Love growne proud with victory,
 Seekes by sleights to conquer me,
 Painted shoves he thinks can bind
 His commands in womens mind.
 (U55.1-4)²⁶

Probably aware of such dynamics, Milton's Cupid-Satan plans better than Comus and succeeds. He had already foretold the implications of suffering oneself to be desired during the dream "prequel": that all "with ravishment / Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze" (*Paradise Lost* 5.46-47). So he binds his commands in Eve's mind in order to neutralize her knowledge that he seeks to conquer with sleights. And as Milton criticizes the courtly dispensation of flattery for the purposes of seduction through the credulous mother and the spirited sly snake, he suggests that poets such as Waller (and Wroth), with Ovid as *magister*, re-enact the pattern of the Fall. Perhaps men are, as the Young Lady of "The Emulation" describes them, "the insulting Sex" (6), and women "the deluded Sex" (1).²⁷

III

Let us not be thus over-curious to strain at atoms, and yet to stop every vent and cranny of permissive liberty: lest nature wanting those needful pores, and breathing places which God hath not debarr'd our weaknes, either suddenly break out into some wide rupture of open vice, and frantick heresy, or els inwardly fester with repining and blasphemous thoughts, under an unreasonable and fruitles rigor of unwarranted law.
 (*The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* [CPW 2: 354])

To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty
 (*Comus* 77)

cunctas
 posse capi: capies, tu modo tende plagas.
 (*Ars amatoria* 1.269-70)

[all can be caught: you only need to spread your nets and you will catch them.]

The divorce tracts and parts of *Paradise Lost* strongly imply a Miltonic belief that physical marital relations are essential to the mental health of both partners. One could even say that the vigor of the prose passage

above throbs with the passion that only the extremes of recently experienced sexual frustration or gratification can fuel. In spite of such unexpected candor and magnanimity on the subject, so agreeable to us at the end of the twentieth century, many passages in the corpus echo the sonorous and forbidding line of the Attendant Spirit at Ludlow Castle, disappointing those who want to invent a Milton gleefully rolling in the sty of libertinism. Even in the "permissive liberty" passage above, words such as "rupture" and "fester" implicitly demonize desire. In treating it as suspect, he seems to be in tacit agreement with the *praeceptor* that sexuality merely enables one to snare, to be ensnared, and thereby to tender oneself a fool as well as a sinner. Milton's proverbial ambiguity on the topic naturally invites attempts at explanation meant to serve as commentary on *Paradise Lost*, the voluminous amount of which says more, perhaps, about the age in which a particular critic writes than about the mind of the poet.²⁸ Anyone garnering "evidence" from the poem on the matter must despair at the bulk of passages from which to choose as exempla for a particular argument, forced to limit their number so as not to tire an audience's patience. It has occurred to me that sex was simply one more thing that Milton, rowing in Eden, had to imagine through the eyes of the unfallen and to recreate in poetic form by recalling passions he may have felt. This must have been an extremely difficult feat in an age that had no public forum about such highly private matters truly comparable to our *fin de siècle* media, one that assaults us with so many images of sexuality that we grow numb and accept the bombardment uncritically. Then again, those who historicize the period such as Turner and Chernaik argue that Restoration drama and print (licit and illicit) fulfilled the same function. (What, for instance, does Rochester's *Sodom* say, that political-sexual farce?)²⁹

As I have been arguing, the *Ars amatoria* contributes to Milton's thinking on the subject. The poem's ethos and narratology probably suggested the timelessness of libertinism to him. As a way of focusing toward some conclusions, I would like to begin by addressing a critical commonplace concerning Miltonic ambiguity: that he encapsulates his ambivalence about women and sexuality in the opening portrait of the being whom seventeenth-century women were encouraged to invoke in prayer as their Grandmother Eve.³⁰ Its oddness strikes almost every reader:

Shee as a veil down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets wav'd
As the Vine curls her tendrils, which impli'd

Subjection, but requir'd with gentle sway,
 And by her yielded, by him best receiv'd,
 Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
 And sweet reluctant amorous delay.
 Nor those myserious parts were then conceal'd,
 Then was not guilty shame: dishonest shame
 Of Nature's works, honor dishonorable,
 Sin-bred, how have ye troubl'd all mankind
 With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure
 (4.304–16)

With this general, idealized and vague description, Milton frees himself from exploring the topography of the woman's body, controversies regarding bodily shape, the umbilicus, pubic hair, breast size, and fig leaves left to the painters.³¹ Yet it is still extra-Biblical: the Genesis writer does not mention that Eve has hair, let alone provide such detailed and extended analogical detail, mimetic of her needful submission to Adam rife with paradoxes. It is, in some respects, a clever recasting and reversal of *Ars* 3.769–808, in which the *praeceptor* details the most flattering positions for women to assume in lovemaking. He confesses shame in discussing the matter (“*ulteriora pudet docuisse*” [769]) and then plunges ahead in uncharacteristic specificity about women's bodies; Milton begins with a description featuring no detail about the body and then inveighs against shame. Surely Ovid's opening formulation is merely a ploy to allow him to cross the frontier of *nefas*, such details best left to Catullus before him and Martial to follow. One cannot be entirely sure what Milton is up to; perhaps, like a troubadour, he feels that any particularization would be a desecration. Or there may be some slippage. Perhaps he is ashamed and knows it, sin-bred with shows of seeming pure. Or he may be inviting the male reader to inscribe his own text (with illustrations) on the blank spaces that Milton leaves for Eve's body. Indeed, one could use Patrocino Schweickart's concept of the forced immasculation of the reader because of the apparent androcentricity of this description.³² Except for the veil of hair, Eve is uncovered “even there,” as Shakespeare puts it in Sonnet 41.11, no pagan love-goddess “*ipsa Venus pubem . . . / protegitur*” (*Ars amatoria* 2.613) with hand over her *pudor*. Yet the passage recalls and revises its Ovidian predecessor in other ways. The master sees women of old as hopelessly rustic, but explains, “*corpora si ueteres non sic coluere puellae, / nec ueteres cultos sic habuere uiros*” [if women of old did not cultivate their bodies, women of old had no men so cultivated] (3.107–08). Surely Milton did not see Eve as rustic, simply (and

appropriately) “unadorned.” The *praeceptor* also discusses hair, suggesting first that it should be carefully fashioned, “non sint sine lege capilli” (3.133), but admitting, in anticipation of his great successor and his Eve, that wanton ringlets are becoming to many: “neclecta decet multas coma” (153). Unfallen Eve has no need of such choices.

In order to describe Eve as enticingly innocent and wantonly chaste, Milton was again forced to rely on what formalists call paradox as part of his Ovidian strategy, arousing the indignation of critics such as C. S. Lewis.³³ She is “Virgin Majesty” (*Paradise Lost* 9.270) to the narrator, just as women are (strangely) to the prince of perversion, Belial, who also praises them as “Virgin majesty with mild / And sweet allay’d” (*Paradise Regained* 2.159–60). The understandably besotted Adam loves Eve’s “Innocence and Virgin Modesty” (*Paradise Lost* 8.501) and joys that her “obsequious Majesty approv’d” his “pleaded reason” (509–10) that they retire—as soon as humanly possible—to “thir blissful Bower” (4.690) to taste the fleshly fruits of the earthly paradise. This last epithet seems once again to reanimate and revise. The *praeceptor* repeatedly recommends *obsequium* as a means of male coercion and deceit (*Ars amatoria* 2.179, 181, 183). Eve does not need to be manipulative since she “what was Honor knew” (*Paradise Lost* 8.508). However, her reticence is similarly effective, “Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retir’d, / The more desirable” (504–05), illustrating or exorcising the Ovidian dictum: “uir male dissimulat, tectius illa cupit” [the man dissembles badly, the woman hides her desire better] (*Ars amatoria* 1.276)—albeit Eve’s sweet, reluctant, amorous delay suggests that she is, indeed, *tectius* in comparison to her mate.³⁴

Milton’s extra-Biblical and anti-Augustinian view of prelapsarian sexuality owes much to rabbinical tradition, Renaissance Latin commentary, and Ovid. Nonetheless, the picture of Adam and Eve, “Imparadis’t in one another’s arms” (*Paradise Lost* 4.505–06) through the eyes of the jealous Satan, suggests a due benevolence and a labored sweetness (albeit from a heavily masculinist point of view) absent from these sources.³⁵ Ovid, of course, cannot conceive of prehistoric asexuality either, and also meditates on the first human beings in the Golden Age, although somewhat unhappily: “quid facerent, ipsi nullo didicere magistro; / arte Venus nulla dulce peregit opus” [what they should do, they learned from no master; Venus sweetly performed the act with no art] (*Ars amatoria* 2.480). Given such rustic coupling, the *praeceptor* once again demonstrates an essential need for his *ars*; *dulcis* could not be more irrelevant. Milton devotes much of *Paradise Lost* 8 to refashioning such a distich and its underlying attitude. Adam and Eve needed no master for their “youthful

dalliance" (4.338) because they required no *ars*, the real Paradise, perhaps, without the "Casual fruition" that Milton believed the "Court Amours" (4.766) of Charles I encouraged.

It is at this point that Milton leaves his classical predecessor in antiquity in order to find fresh woods and pastures new. Adam tells Raphael that dalliance began immediately. On receiving her from God, he rushes voiceless Eve "To the Nuptial Bow'r" (8.510), speaking to Him but not to her. Her feelings and thoughts are not recorded, only a blush like the morn. Why? Perhaps Milton could not conceive of representing Eve (or any woman) speaking about sex or possessing an erotic consciousness—or knew he would look ridiculous if he tried to do so. Yet something more difficult lay ahead: describing the unspeakable bliss of the first prelapsarian orgasm, a staggering authorial problem on any number of levels. Better perhaps to adopt the distancing technique of leaving this task to its enjoyer, a man: "here / Far otherwise, transported I behold, / Transported touch; here passions first I felt, / Commotion strange" (8.528–31). Adam's raptures seem to be poetically unprecedented. Except for the mutual climax passage to which I have alluded (*Ars amatoria* 2.703–32), Ovid makes no mention of this hypostate; for all of his cynical references to "fruition" and "spending," even Rochester describes only the "had" and "inquest-to-have," never the "having." Not only Eve's looks infuse sweetness into Adam's heart (*Paradise Lost* 8.474–75)—enjoyment waits on desire.

Raphael's displeasure at Adam's admissions is manifold; the approval of the *magister Amoris* would have been total. It is possible to be "sunk in carnal pleasure" (593) in Paradise. The endlessly dangerous "roving" of Fancy has led him to love an "outside" (568) only, suggesting that he needs to be reminded that "true Love" does not consist in passion (588–89), and that "the sense of touch whereby mankind / Is propagated" is also "vouchsaf't / To Cattle and each Beast" (579–82). Surely this angel cannot be wrong, nor can the God whose will he expresses, but the subversive reader may well ask: how would Raphael be able to understand Adam's experience as *humanum genus* and comment knowledgeably on it? He explains angelic sexuality with some embarrassment, they who "obstacle find none / Of membrane, joint, or limb" (624–25); it should also be pointed out that Milton's God Himself explains his isolation and asexuality, "alone / From all Eternity" (405–06). Milton's (chaste) exclamation at the sight of naked Eve serving Raphael and Adam at table argues the involuntary reactions that she must elicit from her spouse (5.443–50). Neither God nor Raphael would be subject to the "Darts of desire" Eve transmits "Into all Eyes to wish her still in sight" (8.62–63) as Adam is; the "long and ardent look" (9.397) he gives her as she walks

away to her fate says as much. Men are often transfixed by the feminine gait, as the *praeceptor* tells women: “discite femineo corpora ferre gradu” [learn to bear yourself with a feminine step] (*Ars amatoria* 3.298). Unfallen Eve, it seems, does instinctively what fallen women must learn to know, that it is better to control one’s own behavior: “maius opus mores composuisse suos” (370).

Adam’s spirited defense of his motivations and desires (*Paradise Lost* 8.595–617) betrays an anxiety that Raphael may be correct in his pseudo-Ovidian admonishment about uxoriousness. His parenthetical aside during the speech in which he contextualizes and distinguishes his own desires from those of the animal kingdom, “(Though higher of the genial Bed by far, / And with mysterious reverence I deem)” (598–99), suggests as much with its hierarchical diction (“higher,” “reverence”). This sort of intricacy continues as he attributes godlike qualities to Eve, most alarming to the archangel:

when I approach
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
And in herself complete, so well to know
Her own, that what she wills to do or say,
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;
All higher knowledge in her presence falls
Degraded

(8.546–52)

This may, perhaps, be worse than finding oneself sunk in carnal lust: “absolute”; “complete”; “what she wills”; her essential superiority to “All higher knowledge”; the string of superlative adjectives ascribes divine qualities to Grandmother Eve. Adam eventually makes this blasphemous transference complete, as his jealous Father, through the presence of the Son, implies after the Fall: “Was shee thy God[?]” (10.145) and “Thou didst resign thy Manhood” (148); “Adorn’d / She was indeed, and lovely to attract / Thy Love, not thy Subjection” (151–53). So Adam discovers that Raphael was right after all. Milton’s narrator, in his dire warnings about womankind, prefigures these divine observations: “Thus it shall befall / Him who to worth in Woman overtrusting / Lets her Will rule” (9.1182–184). In this, both bard and Almighty reconfigure the sentiments of the *magister* after his catalogue of crimes prompted by women’s lust (*Ars amatoria* 1.277–340): “omnia feminea sunt ista libidine mota; / acrior est nostra plusque furoris habet” [women’s lust brought all of this about; it is harsher than ours and has more fury] (341–42). Eve’s will to

do or say, *acrior* indeed, defies its own subjection, subjugating Adam's in the process. So, on the matter of sexuality, *Paradise Lost* may enact Fish's paradigm. The male reader, led along the primrose path of dalliance by Milton the *praeceptor*, finds himself trapped into empathizing with Adam and re-enacting the Fall within himself, a puffed and reckless libertine.

Milton was aware that Ovid did not cleave to the Christian distinctions between "love" (*caritas*, ἀγάπη) and "lust" (*cupiditas*, ἐρως) that most modern readers anachronistically impose on the texts they read from all time periods. The binary *fas* and *nefas* collide in *Ars amatoria*, *Aeneid*, *Metamorphoses*, and the *carmina* of Horace and Catullus, but lust and love are one. Amor is inevitably perilous, a kind of affliction, wound, or disease, as the *magister* suggests: "quo me fixit Amor, quo me uiolentius ussit, / hoc melior facti uulneris ultor ero" [the more violently Amor has pierced me, has branded me, the better I will avenge the wound he has made] (*Ars amatoria* 1.23–24). As we have seen in the dialogue between Raphael and Adam, Milton's thinking on the matter is more complicated (or confused) than what one can glean from the foregoing paradigms. Prelapsarian Adam and Eve clearly lust and entice, problematic but hardly demonic until the Fall. That sex proves to be "The solace of thir sin" (9.1044) and that they find their "wonted Ornaments now soil'd and stain'd" (1076) simply explains Milton's myth of shame, sin-bred, a terrible consequence of disobedience.³⁶ Milton clarifies this idea in the differences in non-erotic fleshly contact before and after: by instinct the couple holds hands almost constantly (e.g., 4.689); as Eve willfully departs for her fate, "her hand / Soft she withdrew" (9.385–86); as Adam ferociously asserts his sexual dominion on the way to their *locus amoenus* that has become a Bower of Bliss, "Her hand he seized" (1037). Although fallen sexuality is already present in *Paradise Lost* in the person of Satan, and Ovidian rhetoric occupies both sides of the divide, the Fall itself does not incorporate our first parents into devilish depths of tormented depravity. Adam's rough handling of Eve is no Satanic rape of Sin, albeit he too proves a libertine in his own *carpe diem* speech of seduction as he, now a fallen Waller, delineates her as "exact of taste" (1017). Milton depicts Satan's voyeuristic lust surprisingly like the agonies that Ovid's Amor inflicts on the unwitting and unwilling: "fierce desire, / Among our other torments not the least" (4.509–10).³⁷ This kind of libertinism, Satanic in origin, helps Milton explain the differences between men and women and their troublesome disguises that they refuse to put off, content instead to pursue and be pursued.

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NOTES

1. Quotations from Thomas Killigrew: *Comedies and Tragedies* (London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1664). Quotations from the *Ars amatoria* are taken from P. Ovidii Nasonis *Amores, Medicamina Faciei Femineae Ars Amatoria Remedia Amoris*, 2nd ed., ed. E. J. Kenney (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1994). All translations from Latin are my own unless otherwise noted. Quotations from Milton's poetry are taken from *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Odyssey P, 1957).

2. So Robert Herrick, at the end of his collection *Hesperides* (1648), translates Ovid's famous plea to Augustus: "vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mea" (*Tristia* 2.354). See P. Ovidii Nasonis *Tristium Libri Quinque Ibis Ex Ponto Libri Quattuor Halieutica Fragmenta*, ed. S. G. Owen (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1978).

3. Augustus exiled Ovid to what is now Romania because of the *Ars amatoria* and for another reason that has never been explained, but to which Ovid alludes in *Tristia* 2.207–20. Killigrew spent most of the Interregnum on the fringes of Charles' exiled court in France and Switzerland composing exceptionally licentious comedies, polishing them at the Restoration, then revising and producing them for performance by the company for which he had been granted a patent, King's. Milton served as propagandist and Latin secretary for the Cromwellian government, suffering a form of internal exile during the period 1660–62 as he began to re-conceive and compose *Paradise Lost*, dictating it in fits and starts to various amanuenses as he awaited the distant but excruciating possibility of a traitor's death. Concerning this matter, many have noted the mention of the mangled Orpheus in *Paradise Lost* 7.32–38 and suggested a tentative connection with *Metamorphoses* 11.50–51. Laura Lunger Knoppers draws an analogy between Orpheus, Milton, and the death of the regicides, but does not mention Ovid: "Orpheus becomes an emotionally powerful figure for the regicides and for Milton's own precarious situation in the early Restoration. As we have seen, doubling the joy and celebrations is the drama of the scaffold, the grisly and horrific hangings, beheadings, and quarterings of the regicides . . . The figure of the dismembered, beheaded Orpheus would have been particularly moving and resonant in 1667, given the harrowing fate that Milton himself had just narrowly escaped." See *Historicizing Milton: Spectacle, Power, and Poetry in Restoration England* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994) 90. Dr. Johnson is somewhat more cynical than this: "it seems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger," because "Milton was certainly not one of them [the regicides]; he had only justified what they had done." See *Lives of the English Poets*, 3 vols., ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1905) 1: 130, 127.

4. See Frank A. Patterson and French Rowe Fogle, *An Index to the Columbia Edition of the Works of John Milton*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia UP, 1940) 2: 1409. John Rumrich vivisects "the invented Milton, a rhetorical artifact or paradigm foundational to contemporary scholarship." See *Milton Unbound: Controversy and Reinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 2, 1–23. Milton claims a kinship with his eminent predecessor from his earliest work: "O utinam vates nunquam graviora tulisset / Ille Tomitano flebilis exul agro" [oh if that poet, a sorrowing exile in Tomis land, had never endured anything worse] (*Elegy 1* 21–22). One could even align Milton's preferred forms of blank verse and couplets with Ovid's equally beloved hexameters and elegiacs.

5. Davis P. Harding, *Milton and the Renaissance Ovid* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1946); Louis P. Martz, *Poet of Exile: A Study of Milton's Poetry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980) 203–06; Richard DuRocher, *Milton and Ovid* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985). DuRocher: "Rather than diminishing Milton's individual talent, the Ovidian tradition tempers the poet's putatively monolithic style with flexibility, multivocality, and wit" (18); Milton is fond of "associating Ovidian diction, imagery, and rhetoric with figures of his own creation whom he regards as emotionally wavering or ethically suspect" (38). Although DuRocher limits his discussion to the *Metamorphoses*, these observations apply

very well to Milton's use of the erotic poetry, as well. Others who analyze the Ovidian inheritance: Albert C. Labriola, "The Titans and the Giants: *Paradise Lost* and the Tradition of the Renaissance Ovid," *Milton Quarterly* 12 (1978): 9–16; Barbara Pavlock, *Eros, Imitation, and the Epic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990); Christopher Grose, "Portable and Compendious Utopias: Milton, Sandys, and the Last of the Renaissance Ovids," *Utopias del Nuevo Mundo*, ed. Anna Housková and Martin Procházka (Prague: Charles UP, 1993) 88–98; John Mulryan, "Through a Glass Darkly": Milton's Reinvention of the Mythological Tradition (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1996); Stella Revard, *Milton and the Tangles of Nearea's Hair: The Making of the 1645 "Poems"* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1997).

6. DuRocher explains that all poems after 1645 "contain only rare and relatively insubstantial reminiscences of the amatory Ovid" (45–46), just as Harding had claimed four decades previously (55–56). Although Revard makes no large claims for the Latin poetry in the later corpus, her observations could certainly be applied in this way: that Milton's Latinity is in the neo-Latin tradition of Johannus Secundus and George Buchanan (6); that *Elegy* 7 5–6 owes much to *Amores* 1.1 (29); that Roman elegists habitually "retracted" their works (41); and that Milton's "retraction" does not reject the erotic so much as the idea of elegy as a literary form (40–43). John K. Hale's analysis of the Latin poetry is perhaps the most compendious. He thinks of Milton's borrowing from Ovid as play, a game much extended beyond the *Elegies*; he also makes the valuable point about Milton's schooling, imitation, and emulation: "once sufficient fluency and correctness had been gained, the rules would be reversed: slavish fidelity, the saying of Ovidian things in no language and rhythm but those already used by Ovid, became a fault." See "Milton Playing with Ovid," *Milton Studies* 25 (1989): 4–6. See also his "Artistry and Originality in Milton's Latin Poems," *Milton Quarterly* 27 (1993): 136–43. In addition, see John R. C. Martyn, "Milton's *Elegia Septima*," *Actus Conventus Neo-Latini Lovaniensis*, ed. J. I. Ijsewijn and E. Kessler (Leuven: Wilhelm Fink Verlag München, 1973) 383–87.

7. "Haec ego non fugi spectacula grata severus, / Impetus et quo me fert iuvenilis agor" [I did not flee the beautiful sights in a moralistic way, but was led where the youthful impulse brought me] (*Elegy* 7 57–58); "Protinus insoliti subierunt corda furores; / Uror amans intus, flammaque totus eram" [Immediately strange passions enveloped my heart; I burned inside like a lover and was completely aflame] (73–74).

8. All quotations from Milton's prose works: *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, general ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953–82).

9. For extended discussion of Milton and the Restoration, see Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1978); Nicholas Jose, *Ideas of the Restoration in English Literature 1660–71* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984); N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1987); Steven Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649–1689* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993); William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, 2 vols., revised ed., ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996) 1: 567–68; and Knoppers, *Historicizing Milton*.

10. In addition to the works on Milton and the Restoration listed above, see Earl Miner, *The Restoration Mode from Milton to Dryden* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974). For a discussion of philosophical and literary libertinism, see D. M. Foxon, *Libertine Literature in England 1660–1745* (New Hyde Park, N. Y.: University Books, 1965); Harold Weber, *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986); Warren L. Chernaik, *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).

11. The *Oxford English Dictionary* reports that in Caroline and Cromwellian England, "libertine" was always negative, tending to denote the scandalous practices of sixteenth-century antinomian sects and to demonize religious freethinking. In *The Doctrine and*

Discipline of Divorce, Milton uses the term in this slanderous way: "the Papists who are the strictest forbidders of divorce, are the easiest libertines to admit of grossest uncleanness" (CPW 2: 342). See also *Of Reformation*: "the second sort of those that may be justly number'd among the hinderers of *Reformation*, are Libertines, those suggest that the Discipline sought would be intolerable: for one Bishop new in a Dioces we should then have a Pope in every Parish" (CPW 1: 570); earlier in the same treatise he lumps them with "Antiquarians" and "Politicians" (1: 541). "Libertine" eventually came to occupy its present definition in Milton's lifetime: "A man who is not restrained by moral law, esp. in his relations with the female sex; one who leads a dissolute, licentious life." Hill discusses the appellation of the term to Milton by his enemies (in all three senses) because of the divorce tracts (106–09) and even before this (451–52). "The orthodox in the seventeenth century believed—or pretended to believe—that mortalists became libertines. But so, it was argued, did antinomians; and antinomianism, as we have seen, could derive from heavy emphasis on the sonship of all believers, which was one possible variant of anti-Trinitarianism. Both mortalism and the rejection of the Trinity thus seemed to produce antinomian justification of sexual promiscuity" (323). Turner's *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1987) discusses these matters in great detail (especially 82–83 and 190). Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, "frames the most erotic passages with bold attacks on libertine sexuality" (167), yet "contemporaries were not wrong to detect a radical and 'Libertine' undercurrent in Milton" (94), "a shadowy affinity with the libertine opposition that his enemies were quick to amplify into open sensuality" (251).

12. See Hill's meditation on this Miltonic phrase, one that Puritan pamphleteers used about the Cavaliers during the Civil War (407–08).

13. See *The Plays of Sir George Etherege*, ed. Michael Corder (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982).

14. Jackson Campbell Boswell, *Milton's Library: A Catalogue of the Remains of John Milton's Library and an Annotated Reconstruction of Milton's Library and Ancillary Readings* (New York: Garland, 1975) 183. Turner suggests that Milton and other Puritans felt that erotic passages from Proverbs and the Song of Songs "should be interpreted as God's *ars amatoria*, instructing the inexperienced and strengthening their spirits against harsh and ascetic denials of the flesh" (208). See also Mulryan's theories concerning Milton's debt to the neoplatonic tradition of the *trattato d'amore* (89–113).

15. See Turner's discussion of the Cavalier artistic tradition of making Adam, Eve, and the serpent the stock figures of comedy, wife, cuckold, and rake: "The libertine tradition drains the myth of tragic seriousness, and 'uncrowns' its sublime pretensions" (170). In a brief discussion of the cavalier lyric and *Paradise Lost*, William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden credit Ovid with inventing the dominant sexual fantasy in western love poetry, which "passed down through the centuries in ventry—the love hunt. Men chase, women flee." See "Milton's Coy Eve: *Paradise Lost* and Renaissance Love Poetry," *English Literary History* 53 (1986): 38–39.

16. Fish: "Milton again and again employs forms (of argument, imagery, justification) that are then discarded or repudiated or denounced; and he does this because it is precisely his contention that *all* forms—except the ever-receding form of truth—hold out the temptation to idolatry, a temptation he confronts by never allowing any structure to gain control of his argument, indeed, by not allowing his argument to gain control of itself." See "Driving from the Letter: Truth and Indeterminacy in Milton's *Areopagitica*," *Re-membering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions*, ed. Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson (London: Methuen, 1987) 249. Many critiques of Fish's reading of *Paradise Lost* exist: one of the best is Rumrich's (1–23).

17. "His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the foretop, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam [*Paradise Lost* 4.301–03]" (*Lives* 1: 151).

18. *Milton's God* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961; revised ed. 1965).

19. See *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,"* ed. Susanne Woods (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 84.

20. See *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Verse*, ed. Germaine Greer, Susan Hastings, Jeslyn Medoff, and Melinda Sanstone (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989) 312.

21. See *The Comedies of William Congreve*, ed. Anthony G. Henderson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982). Turner: "Eve's wittily understated eroticism . . . gives her the frankness of a Restoration heroine without the guardedness" (257).

22. "Ovid as literary master was not the mere inverse of Petrarch. In libertine poetry, the old moral and theological critique of sexual love reappears at the level of nature: there is a curse or privation in the very design of it" (Kerrigan and Braden 33). Noam Flinker theorizes that Milton demonizes Petrarch, instead: "Satan's incestuous affair with his daughter Sin provides the most striking instance of manipulative masculinity based upon Petrarchan rhetoric"; "The Petrarchan or courtly lover who rarely treats his beloved as an individual with real emotions but prefers to see her as an extension of his own ideas, needs, and ideals is thus condemned." See "Courting Urania: The Narrator of *Paradise Lost* Invokes His Muse," *Milton and the Idea of Woman*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988) 86, 89. See also Kathleen M. Swaim, "The Art of the Maze in Book IX of *Paradise Lost*," *Studies in English Literature* 12 (1972): 129–40.

23. See especially the notorious Letter 44 (16 Oct 1747 o. s.): "Men have various objects in which they may excel, or at least would be thought to excel; and though they love to hear justice done to them, where they know that they excel, yet they are most and best flattered upon those points where they wish to excel, and yet are doubtful whether they do or not." See *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, with the Characters*, 3 vols, ed. John Bradshaw (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1892) 1: 65. And see also Johnson's indignation at Milton's praise of Cromwell in the *Defensio Secunda*: "Caesar when he assumed the perpetual dictatorship had not more servile or more elegant flattery" (*Lives* 1: 118).

24. "An undoubted, uncontested, conscious beauty is, of all women, the least sensible of flattery upon that head; she knows it is her due, and is therefore obliged to nobody for giving it her. She must be flattered upon her understanding, which, though she may possibly not doubt of herself, yet she suspects that many may distrust" (*Letters* 1: 66).

25. *Poems, &c. Written upon Several Occasions, and to Several Persons*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for H. Herringman, 1686).

26. See *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983) 194.

27. Similarly, Jane Barker, reading the Eve story as one of oppression:

And because we precipitated first,
To Pains and Ignorance are most accurs'd;
Ev'n by our Counter-parts, who that they may
Exalt themselves, insultingly will say,
Women know little, and they practice less;
But Pride and Sloth they glory to profess.
(*"She beginning to study physick, takes her leave of poetry"* 33–38)

See *Kissing the Rod*, ed. Greer et al. 310, 362.

28. For discussions of sex in Milton, see William and Malleville Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 5 (1942): 235–72; Roland Mushat Frye, "The Teachings of Classical Puritanism on Conjugal Love," *Studies in the Renaissance* 2 (1955): 148–59; Peter Lindenbaum, "Love-making in Milton's Paradise," *Milton Studies* 6 (1974):

277–306; Edward Le Comte, *Milton and Sex* (New York: Columbia UP, 1975); Laurence Lerner, *Love and Marriage: Literature and Its Social Context* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979) especially 111–21; David Aers and Bob Hodge, “‘Rational Burning’: Milton on Sex and Marriage,” *Literature, Language, and Society in England 1580–1680*, ed. David Aers, Bob Hodge, and Gunther Kress (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981) 122–51; Catherine Gimelli Martin, “Demystifying Disguises: Adam, Eve, and the Subject of Desire,” *Renaissance Discourses of Desire*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1993) 237–58; Turner, *One Flesh*; and, Donald M. Friedman, “Divisions on a Ground: ‘Sex’ in *Paradise Lost*,” *Of Poetry and Politics: New Essays on Milton and His World*, ed. P. G. Stanwood (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995) 203–12.

29. This amazing document is intriguingly historicized by Harold Weber, *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship Under Charles II* (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1996).

30. For “Grandmother Eve,” see Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel* (New York: Knopf, 1984) passim. Some notable criticism on Eve includes: John S. Diekhoff, “Eve’s Dream and the Paradox of Fallible Perfection,” *Milton Quarterly* 4 (1970): 5–7; Marcia Landy, “Kinship and the Role of Women in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Studies* 4 (1972): 3–18; Stella P. Revard, “Eve and the Doctrine of Responsibility in *Paradise Lost*,” *PMLA* 88 (1973): 69–78; Barbara K. Lewalski, “Milton on Women—Yet Once More,” *Milton Studies* 6 (1974): 4–20; Sandra M. Gilbert, “Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton’s *Bogey*,” *PMLA* 93 (1978): 368–82; Diane Kelsey McColley, “Free Will and Obedience in the Separation Scene of *Paradise Lost*,” *Studies in English Literature* 12 (1972): 103–20; *Milton’s Eve* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1983); and “Eve and the Arts of Eden,” *Milton and the Idea of Woman*, ed. Julia M. Walker, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988) 100–119.

31. McColley discusses depictions of Eve in Renaissance art and Milton’s divergence from them in *Milton’s Eve* (4–9; plates between 16–17).

32. See “Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading,” *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts and Contexts*, ed. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocino Schweickart (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986) 50.

33. Lewis’s (mis-)readings of such passages are astonishing for their naiveté. He argues that “Eve exhibits modesty too exclusively in sexual contexts, and his Adam does not exhibit it at all. There is even a strong and (in the circumstances) a most offensive suggestion of female bodily shame as an incentive to male desire. I do not mean that Milton’s love-passages are objectionable by normal human standards; but they are not consistent with what he himself believes about the world before the Fall.” See *A Preface to “Paradise Lost”* (New York: Oxford UP, 1942) 76. Lewis exhibits similar unease at other depictions of sexuality, particularly in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1954). *Hero and Leander* demonstrates “the rest of the universe transfigured by the hard, brittle splendour of erotic vision” (487); there is “no pitiful pretence that appetite is anything other than appetite” (488). On *Venus and Adonis*: “If the poem was not meant to arouse disgust it was very foolishly written” (499). And one could not accuse him of anticipating the development of queer theory: “If [Shakespeare] had intended in these sonnets to be the poet of pederasty, I think he would have left us in no doubt; the lovely παιδικά, attended by a whole train of mythological perversities, would have blazed across the pages” (503).

34. B. A. Wright suggests that “sweet, reluctant, amorous delay” owes its genesis to *Ars 2.717*, in which the *praeceptor* recommends mutual climax. See “Note on *Paradise Lost*, IV, 310,” *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 5 (1958): 341. Le Comte concurs and states that Milton’s line “is the most libidinous . . . in the whole poem” (91), an idea with which Kerrigan and Braden agree (38–39).

35. See Lindenbaum, “Love-making in Milton’s *Paradise*” 277–306. Turner discusses Milton’s appropriation of Augustine and summarizes the latter’s most un-Miltonic view

thus: "If they had not fallen first, . . . Adam and Eve would have made love consciously and deliberately, moving the genitals as we move our hands or our faces; sexual emission would have been exactly like the voluntary discharge of urine" (45). Much of *De civitate Dei* 14 (especially 10–26) is devoted to sexuality, licit and otherwise. See, for example, 14.10: "Away, I say, with the thought, that before there was any sin, there should already have been committed regarding that fruit the very sin which our Lord warns us against regarding a woman: 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart' [Matthew 5.28]. As happy, then, as were these our first parents, who were agitated by no mental perturbations, and annoyed by no bodily discomforts, so happy should the whole human race have been, had they not introduced that evil which they have transmitted to their posterity." See *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1950) 457. See also C. A. Patrides, *Milton and the Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1966).

36. A. J. A. Waldock: "It is obvious that Adam and Eve must already have contracted human weaknesses before they can start on the course of conduct that leads to their fall: to put it another way, they must already be fallen (technically) before they can begin to fall. Nor, again, is it possible to see just how the change from love to lust came about, or what was in the act of disobedience that necessitated it." To my mind, Waldock misses the essential point: lust-desire, already present in Adam and Eve, becomes viral with the "act of disobedience" itself. See "*Paradise Lost*" and *Its Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1947) 61. Turner comments somewhat more ably: "But Milton does not turn away from the uglier side of sexuality. He is not afraid to make Adam and Eve the first fornicators as well as the first couple locked in wedded love. At the very moment of the fall, as an immediate 'operation' of the fruit, before they are aware of nakedness and shame, they blaze with desire and copulate on the flowers—the 'seal' and 'solace' of their transgression. . . . [They] fall into lust, not from some ethereal condition of magic asexuality, but from full and happy consummation; even in the state of guilt their love-making is not a rape, . . . but a 'mutual' and pleasurable act" (172).

37. To Lewis, Satan is "a spy into the universe, and soon not even a political spy, but a mere peeping Tom leering and writhing in prurience as he overlooks the privacy of two lovers, . . . a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows" (*A Preface to "Paradise Lost"* 97). In what may be euphemistically called dialectical imitation, Turner expands on Lewis's point: the devil's "alliance with Asmodeus and Belial, his dalliance with Sin, and his response to the perfumes of Paradise . . . ensure that we already associate him with demonic copulation. Now, confronting unfallen sexuality directly, he seems to be trapped in a situation from Aretino; he is not so much the voyeur . . . as the initiate concealed behind a peephole" (258).