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# Paradise Lost and the Concept of Creation

## **Comments**

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# *Paradise Lost* and the Concept of Creation

Kent R. Lehnhof, Duke University

SCHOLARS HAVE LONG RECOGNIZED that the process of creation is crucial to Milton's poetry. Almost sixty years ago W. B. C. Watkins affirmed that creation is "deeply interfused" in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Pointing out that Milton "never lets us forget from beginning to end the Divine creative process," Watkins concludes that creation "is both [the] substance and structure of his epic."<sup>1</sup> Subsequent critics have confirmed this claim, commenting at length upon the ways in which acts of creation anchor Milton's epic. As Michael Lieb points out: "Creation is so important to the action of *Paradise Lost*, [that] most scholars have had something to say about its presence in Milton's epic."<sup>2</sup> Lieb's own book-length engagement with *Paradise Lost* emerges from the insight that "the idea of creation in all its aspects" serves as the "common referent by which the oppositions of the poem find expression."<sup>3</sup> In spite of all this critical attention, however, I believe that we have yet to take the full measure of Milton's interest in acts of creation. For Milton, creation is more than a compelling metaphor or elaborate image of divine power. Rather, creation constitutes the very essence of deity. This state of affairs arises from Milton's single-minded subscription to a materialist monism which asserts that all life originates in and is composed of one and the same substance.

According to Milton, the universe was not created *ex nihilo* but rather *de deo*; everything was fashioned from the singular substance of the Father. The Father's substance thus constitutes the "one first matter" out of which "all things proceed" (5.469–72).<sup>4</sup> This *de deo* genesis ennobles each and every existent, for it provides a material link between creation and the Creator. Since everything is to some degree a part of the Father, everything is to some degree divine. In the same way that Milton's monist logic lends a touch of godliness to all of creation, however, it simultaneously unsettles orthodox ideas about the identity of God.

As Michael Bauman explains, orthodox Christianity at the time of Milton attributes to God a unique substance, a divine *ousia*, that belongs exclusively to God: "Within the orthodox trinitarian scheme . . . the divine *ousia* is unequivocally the possession of the Godhead only,

and is in no way common to beings not themselves absolutely divine.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the divine *ousia* of God serves to differentiate him from all other existents and in this way sets him apart as a unique being—the one and only true God. Within Milton’s theological framework, however, the Father possesses no compositional originality and thus cannot be separated from the rest of the universe on the basis of some divine materiality. Simply possessing divine substance is insufficient to establish God’s supernatural supremacy, for everything that exists in Milton’s universe partakes of the same substance as God. As Bauman observes, the idea of a “divine *ousia*” cannot operate as the defining attribute of deity in Miltonic contexts because everything in the Miltonic universe is made from the same substance as the Father: “Those who possess [God’s] ‘substantia’ are not necessarily God, because in Milton’s universe *all created things whatsoever*, from archangels down to aardvarks and anthracite coal, share the same ‘substantia.’” Thus, for Milton, substantial similarity to God cannot serve as “the infallible hallmark of true divinity.”<sup>6</sup>

Since divinity cannot be established by reference to a divine composition, Milton’s materialist monism requires that deity be defined otherwise. In the course of this essay, I will demonstrate that the alternative definition of deity operating in *Paradise Lost* grounds itself in the concept of creation. In Milton’s epic, deity is a function of creation. God is god by virtue of his singular role in the Genesis of the universe.

The conviction that God’s deity derives from his ability to create grows out of the idea that every creature is indebted to its author for bestowing upon it the gift of life or being. Because this gift demands gratitude as long as it is enjoyed, each creature finds itself in a position of life-long indebtedness to its Maker. It is this condition of eternal arrearage that Satan describes as “the debt immense of endless gratitude, / So burthensome still paying, still to ow” (4.52–53). Although Satan yearns to disown this creaturely debt, the epic asserts the futility of all such efforts. In *Paradise Lost*, authorship produces obligations that are inexorable and power relations that are impermutable. According to the schema Milton elaborates in the poem, one masters what one makes. Because God has authored everything, he is authorized to rule everything. The Father’s primary role in the creation of the universe thus installs him in a position of supreme power over that universe. His deific sovereignty is a direct result of his generative ability.<sup>7</sup>

Although I would argue that this creation-based concept of deity is principally motivated by Milton’s monism, it is interesting to note the ways in which Milton’s ideas about divine authorship and authority

overlap with the new notions of literary authorship that develop during Milton's lifetime. As several historians of the English book trade have indicated, early modern authors were granted little or no control over their textual productions. Authors were precluded from owning their texts, for printing laws afforded ownership only to registered members of the Stationers' Company. As Stephen Dobranski explains:

Members of the Stationers' Company who obtained a text by any means could have it entered in the *Stationers' Register* to obtain legal ownership. If a Stationer wanted to print an author's work, the author could do little but provide the printer with a good copy so as to prevent the circulation of a poorly made edition.<sup>8</sup>

Although the disenfranchisement of the early modern author did not officially alter until the Copyright Act of 1709, cultural views concerning authorial rights underwent significant change in the latter half of the seventeenth century. As Dobranski reports, stationers began to draw upon authorial authority in order to sell books, "extolling the merit of their wares by claiming to publish an author's authentic, original manuscripts."<sup>9</sup> As authorship came to connote a kind of authority, authors were increasingly empowered insofar as the publication and circulation of their texts were concerned. The publication of *Paradise Lost* in 1667 dramatically announced the advent of the "modern author"—the author who holds a continuing claim over his or her work and enjoys the ability to dispose of it on his or her own terms—for Milton became the first writer in English history to receive a formal contract acknowledging his proprietary rights in his work and paying him to transfer these rights over to the printer.

It is not coincidental that Milton was the first to enter into a publication arrangement of this kind, for his was one of the earliest and most insistent voices to assert the rights of the author. In what copyright historian Mark Rose identifies as "the earliest statement I know which speaks of the author in something like the modern mode as a proprietor," Milton refers in *Areopagitica* to "the just retaining of each man his several copy, which God forbid should be gainsaid."<sup>10</sup> Although Rose suspects that Milton's remark in *Areopagitica* speaks to a stationer's copyright rather than an author's copyright, he points out that Milton unequivocally proclaims the proprietary privileges of the author six years later in *Eikonoklastes*, where Milton contends that authors have an inalienable right to their texts. In the 1650 tract Milton confidently in-

vokes “human right, which commands that every Author should have the property of his own work reservd to him after death as well as living.”<sup>11</sup> By the middle of the century, then, Milton expresses the conviction that authorship communicates to the author complete control over that which is authored. In this manner, Milton’s position on copyright neatly intersects with his stance on divine sovereignty. According to Milton, both the book trade and the universe are governed on the basis of creation: Authorship is authority.

The creation-based concept of authority that informs Milton’s thought spurs him in *Paradise Lost* to worship God (and justify his ways) by celebrating all of the divine actions that give rise to the universe and its inhabitants. Throughout the epic Milton declares God’s sovereignty by describing God’s fecundity. But the theological model of deity that incites Milton’s rehearsal of divine creation constrains that very rehearsal. As Regina Schwartz has astutely observed, Milton’s fascination with God’s creative ability is fraught with uncertainty:

Milton was preoccupied with origins. He wrote of the origin of the cosmos, the birth of his god, the birth of the first man and the first woman, the first utterance, the first interpretation, the first temptation, the first rebellion, the first home, and the first exile. . . . And yet for all of his preoccupation with origins, Milton approached the subject uneasily in *Paradise Lost*. There, he is not certain that beginnings are accessible, and, if they are, he is not sure that they can be expressed guiltlessly. His creation stories are always mediated—by accounts and accounts of accounts—by Raphael, by Uriel, by angelic hymns, by the reconstructions of memory, and by a theory that casts doubt on the ability of language to convey origins at all.<sup>12</sup>

I contend that this conflicted condition is caused by the role creation plays in Milton’s conception of God. Because the ability to create operates in Milton’s mind as the defining feature of deity, his reticence in regards to creation expresses the pious fear of looking too closely, of exposing too clearly the mechanisms whereby deity is determined and expresses itself. Afraid of diminishing God by publishing too profanely those processes from which godhood derives, Milton allays his creation narratives, rehearsing the events through the mouths of mediators and couching the events in equivocal theories of accommodation and analogy.

In spite of this uncertainty, it is obvious that issues of origin and creation are crucial to Milton’s epic. It is not insignificant that Adam’s very first utterance in the poem does not proceed for more than a line

and a half before referring to “the power / That made us, and for us this ample World” (4.412–13). When Adam and Eve tell the stories of their respective “births,” we learn that both sought to discover the source of their existence and the nature of their creator immediately upon gaining self awareness. As Eve recounts:

That day I oft remember, when from sleep  
I first awak’t, and found my self repos’d  
Under a shade of flours, much wondring where  
And what I was, whence thither brought, and how. (4.449–52)

Eve’s first impulse is to ascertain the identity of her creator. Adam expresses an identical instinct. His birth-narration goes a step further, though, disclosing not only a desire to discover the source of his existence but also explaining the motive driving that desire:

As new wak’t from soundest sleep  
Soft on the flourie herb I found me laid  
...  
But who I was, or where, or from what cause,  
Knew not; to speak I tri’d, and forthwith spake,  
...  
Ye Hills and Dales, ye Rivers, Woods, and Plaines,  
And ye that live and move, fair Creatures, tell,  
Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?  
Not of my self; by some great Maker then,  
In goodness and in power præeminent;  
Tell me, how may I know him, how adore,  
From whom I have that thus I move and live. (8.253–54, 270–  
71, 275–81)

Adam wants to know his creator so that he can adore him. His ontological investigations aim to define the structures of authority that shape his world and delineate the obligations these structures impose upon him. Both Adam and Eve intuitively understand the Miltonic premise that universal relations of power are drawn along the lines of creation. As soon as they draw breath, they endeavor to worship their begetter.

The causal connection between recognizing one’s status as creature and revering one’s creator is made explicit in the couple’s two recorded prayers, the nightly orison of Book Four and the matinal invocation of Book Five. The first of these prayers springs spontaneously from Adam and Eve as they consider the sky, air, earth, and heaven that the Father has created:

Thus at thir shadie Lodge arriv'd, both stood,  
 Both turnd, and under the op'n Skie ador'd  
 The God that made both Skie, Air, Earth, and Heav'n  
 Which they beheld, the Moons resplendent Globe  
 And starrie Pole. (4.720–24)

The phrasing of the impromptu prayer reinforces the idea that reverence is being rendered to the Father as a result of his authorial might. The pair identify the object of their prayer as “Maker Omnipotent,” and set out the terms of their devotion with the declaration: “Thou also mad'st the Night, / Maker Omnipotent, and thou the Day” (4.724–25). Adoration is elicited by God's ability to create.

A similar appreciation of God's fecundity motivates the morning petition. As in the evening invocation, contemplation of God's creation provides the occasion of the morning prayer: Adam and Eve begin by declaiming: “These are thy glorious works, Parent of good” (5.153). After lamenting their inability to ponder any but the Father's “lowest works,” the pair nevertheless proclaim that even these “declare / Thy goodness beyond thought, and Power Divine” (5.158–59). The syntax is carefully composed in accordance with Milton's theology, indicating that the creatures God has made (the “lowest works”) offer witness of his divinity (“declare / Thy . . . Power Divine”).

But the morning orison, unlike the evening prayer, is more than an impressive catalog of God's creation. Adam and Eve's daytime prayer goes a step further, inviting all creatures to join in the worship due their creator: “In Heav'n, / [And] on Earth joyn all ye Creatures to extoll / Him first, him last, him midst, and without end” (5.163–65). This general invitation is then made specific as Adam and Eve call upon individual aspects of creation. The sun and moon are urged to “resound / His praise, who out of Darkness call'd up Light”; the air and elements are exhorted to render “to our great Maker still new praise”; and the mists and vapors are admonished to rise “in honour to the Worlds great Author” (5.178–88). Apparently, Adam and Eve's encouragement is unnecessary, for the narrator elsewhere informs us that the Earth and its animal inhabitants are continually engaged in adoration of their author. At dawn, the narrator explains,

All things that breathe,  
 From th'Earths great Altar send up silent praise  
 To the Creator, and his Nostrils fill  
 With grateful Smell. (9.194–97)

The arrival of morning in Eden is commemorated with an outpouring of admiration for the power of the great Creator. Even when its inhabitants are asleep, the Earth continues to echo with praises prompted by an appreciation of God's creative ability. As Adam tells Eve:

Millions of spiritual Creatures walk the Earth  
 Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep:  
 All these with ceaseless praise his works behold  
 Both day and night: how often from the steep  
 Of echoing Hill or Thicket have we heard  
 Celestial voices to the midnight air,  
 Sole, or responsive each to others note  
 Singing thir great Creator. (4.677–84)

Whether intoned by Adam and Eve, exhaled by the animals of Eden, or sung by spiritual visitors, the various prayers offered in the epic indicate that the Father merits submission because he has made all that exists.

Instances of law-giving in *Paradise Lost* also demonstrate that God's authority derives from his authorship. Just before issuing to Adam the terms and conditions of his paradisaical state, God proclaims: "Whom thou sought'st I am, / . . . Author of all this thou seest / Above, or round about thee or beneath" (8.316–18). No additional justification for the succeeding prohibitions is offered or asked: God's status as creator fully legitimizes his authority as law-giver. Raphael's later visit, designed to reiterate the injunction against eating the forbidden fruit, similarly structures its prohibition around assertions of authorship. The angel begins his admonition by alluding to Adam and Eve's origins:

O *Adam*, one Almighty is, from whom  
 All things proceed, and up to him return,  
 If not deprav'd from good, created all  
 Such to perfection, one first matter all,  
 Indu'd with various forms various degrees  
 Of substance, and in things that live, of life. (5.469–74)

Establishing that Adam and Eve have been fashioned by the Almighty, Raphael simultaneously establishes their obligation to obey the Almighty. From this point, the angel need do nothing more than explain what God wishes, for his unfallen audience fully accepts the debt of obedience that they owe their creator. As Adam fervently professes: "We never shall forget to love / Our maker, and obey him whose command / Single,

is yet so just” (5.550–52). Adam acknowledges the justice of his maker’s authority so completely that he cannot even imagine opposing him: “Can we want obedience then / To him, or possibly his love desert / Who formd us from the dust?” (5.514–16).

Raphael’s understanding of divine authority and authorship is rooted in personal experience, for this schema of sovereignty also functions in heaven. It is clear that celestial law-giving, like terrestrial law-giving, is underwritten by a creation-based ideology. When the Father demands that every angel bow beneath the Son, he sets the terms for this submission by asserting that all whom he is about to address owe him allegiance as his progeny: “Hear all ye Angels, Progenie of Light, / . . . / Hear my Decree, which unrevok’t shall stand” (5.600–02).

Although the created condition of all the angels is explicitly invoked on the afternoon of the Son’s begetting, it is implicitly operating at all other times. According to Raphael, heavenly unity stems from a universal acceptance of God’s paternal position. He tells Adam that angels are

wont to meet  
 . . . oft in Festivals of joy and love  
 Unanimous, as sons of one great Sire  
 Hymning th’ Eternal Father. (6.93–96)

Celestial unity is established and maintained by the fact that each angel identifies himself as a son of the “one great Sire.” Heavenly society is predicated upon a common recognition and common celebration of the Father’s paternity.

Raphael’s remark also suggests that the praises sung in heaven, like the praises sung on earth, center in God’s status as the universal father. Other passages in the epic confirm this conclusion. After witnessing God’s feat of bringing about the “Birth-day of Heav’n and Earth,” the hosts of heaven straightaway erupt into shouts of joy. Playing upon their golden harps, the angels “hymning prais’d / God and his works, Creatour him they sung” (7.256–59). When the angels resume their ovation later in the book, they continue to emphasize his acts of authorship, hailing God as “the great Creator from his work returnd” (7.567). The angelic song that concludes Book 7 reiterates the now-familiar reason for reverence: “Creation and the Six dayes acts they sung, / Great are thy works, *Jehovah*, infinite / Thy power” (7.601–03). The last line of this prayer concisely professes the connection between creation and power. Supplying a single word makes the connection even more clear: “Great are thy works, *Jehovah*, [therefore] infinite / Thy power.” Because author-

ity is distributed according to creation, the Father's all-creating identity justly allows him all power.

At least one angel, however, refuses to believe in the justice of the Father's rule. It should not come as any surprise that Satan's rejection of God-as-sovereign is yoked to a denial of God-as-creator. Predictably, the heated exchange between Satan and Abdiel concerning God's right to reign over the celestial hosts focuses on the twinned concepts of authorship and authority.

Addressing his followers in a remote corner of Heaven, Satan questions the legitimacy of the Father's authority:

Who can in reason then or right assume  
Monarchie over such as live by right  
His equals, if in power and splendor less,  
In freedome equal? or can introduce  
Law and Edict on us, who without law  
Erre not? (5.794–99)

Abdiel's answer is simple—the Father's right to “assume / Monarchie” over angels issues from the fact that he formed them:

Shalt thou give Law to God, shalt thou dispute  
With him the points of libertie, who made  
Thee what thou art, and formd the Pow'rs of Heav'n  
Such as he pleasd, and circumscrib'd their being? (5.822–25)

Abdiel defends God's rule with a single, simple assertion: “The mighty Father made / All things, ev'n thee” (5.836–37). Within a creation-based system of sovereignty, Abdiel's statement of fact is sufficient to establish the Father's pre-eminence. Satan will not accept the office of creature, however, and in this way continues to deny God's privilege over him. Spurning as a “strange point and new” Abdiel's assertion that God created all the angelic beings, Satan demands:

who saw  
When this creation was? rememberst thou  
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?  
We know no time when we were not as now;  
Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd  
By our own quick'ning power. (5.855–61)

Upon hearing this claim of self-creation, Abdiel knows that there is no more to say, for Satan's expulsion is irrevocable. The adversary cannot

continue to exist in heaven, having repudiated the creaturely identity that situates him within the heavenly hierarchy. Because the unity of celestial society is founded upon the unanimous acceptance of God's paternity and sovereignty, Satan's refusal to acknowledge God's authorship entails "break[ing] union" (5.612). Since Satan will not assume his proper place, he must be driven out to another place.<sup>13</sup>

Satan's rare moments of quasi-penitence reveal the way in which his adversarial stance is sustained by this claim to self-creation. At those moments when Satan finds it relatively more difficult to deny the Father's authorship, Satan's sinfulness softens. In Book Three, for instance, Satan seeks directions to the Garden of Eden by adopting a cherubic disguise. Approaching Uriel, Satan feigns the desire

to see, and know  
All these [the Father's] wondrous works, but chiefly Man,  
His chief delight and favour, him for whom  
All these his works so wondrous he ordaind. (3.662–65)

The adversary asks that the angel point out the way to Adam's world:

That I may find him, and with secret gaze,  
Or open admiration him behold  
On whom the great Creator hath bestowd  
Worlds, and on whom hath all these graces powrd;  
That both in him and all things, as is meet,  
The Universal Maker we may praise. (3.671–76)

Applauding and rewarding "thy desire which tends to know / The works of God, thereby to glorifie / The great Work-Maister," Uriel provides Satan with the information he lacks (3.694–96). Although the ruse succeeds, Satan has a hard time recovering from his role. After inhabiting (albeit temporarily) an angelic outlook and testifying (albeit insincerely) to the Father's universal creation, Satan cannot keep up his pretense of self-creation. The strategic declaration that God is the source of all life momentarily suspends Satan's assertions of ontological independence, "wak[ing] the bitter memorie / Of what he was, what is, and what must be" (4.24–25). Roused to remember both his Maker and his making, Satan lapses into an unwitting attitude of adoration. As Francis Blessington explains, Satan at this point "comes close to pure hymning." The adversary's soliloquy assumes what Blessington identifies as the "clear classical structure" of a hymn, including an invocation, a recitation of deeds, and a confession of need and guilt.<sup>14</sup> When Satan

pretends to acknowledge the Father's authorship, the pretense proves overwhelming. For a few seconds, he is compelled to acknowledge the Father's authorship and, consequently, the allegiance that he owes him. As Satan contritely avows: "He deservd no such return / From me, whom he created what I was" (4.42–43). The instant he admits God's role in his creation, Satan must concede that this fact of creation imposes upon him an obligation to honor and obey his Maker.

Satan also expresses remorse when he arrives in Eden and surveys all its inhabitants. Searching to find the beast best suited to his devilish designs, Satan "consider[s] every Creature" (9.84). Reviewing the awesome beauty and variety of universal creation, Satan is brought up short. In the same way that Adam and Eve are inspired to worship when they ponder the Father's works, Satan's contemplation of God's creation induces an attitude approaching adoration. Suspending for a short time his evil intents, Satan once more confesses God's role in creation, identifying him as the "build[er]" of Eden (9.102). Satan even admits that the Father is the originary source of the universe, exclaiming that "God in Heav'n / Is Center, [and] extends to all" (9.107–08). Bearing witness to the Father's creative power, Satan momentarily finds himself powerless to pursue his wicked plan. The truth of creation compels submission.

The adversary soon casts off these postures of piety, however, and his ensuing disavowal of God involves—and is enabled by—an attack on God's creative power. Belittling the Father's most recent creatures as inferior in quality to the angels, Satan smugly speculates that God was forced to repair his thinning ranks with humans rather than angels because his ability to beget angels is now exhausted: "such vertue spent of old now faild / More Angels to Create" (9.145–46). The adversary abandons the pleasing thought that God has grown impotent, however, when he comes up with an even better idea. God could not create more angels to replace the rebels, Satan asserts, because angels are not, in fact, "his Created" (9.147). The Father has not lost the ability to author angels because he never had the ability in the first place. Angels are not created by God: angels are self-raised.

Although Satan errs in explaining why God populates Eden with humans rather than angels, he appears to be accurate in describing why the Father undertakes the population of the Garden. Satan rightly understands earthly creation to be an outcome of the expulsion of the rebels and the Father's desire "to reparaire his numbers thus impair'd" (9.144). The Father confirms this conclusion in Book 7 as he downplays the significance of the fall of Satan and his followers. The Father reassures the Son:

I can repaire  
 That detriment, if such it be to lose  
 Self-lost, and in a moment will create  
 Another World, out of one man a Race  
 Of men innumerable. (7.152–56)

Although God denies that the absence of Satan and the other rebels is a “detriment,” he concedes that Adam and Eve’s purpose is to repopulate heaven. Adam and Eve’s reproductive task, however, troubles the epic’s underlying theology. The epic seems to have difficulty sanctioning the creation of a new race out of Adam and Eve, for the creation-based concept of divinity that drives the poem produces a contrary desire, one that would prevent anyone but the Father from bestowing life. If Adam and Eve were to multiply, they would become creators and would thereby threaten—to some degree, at least—the Father’s sole authority. The couple therefore experiences a curious barrenness, an unintended yet nevertheless understandable outgrowth of the schema that governs Milton’s epic universe. Because Milton dispenses divinity according to authorship, propagation potentially challenges the supremacy of the Father.

The subversive nature of Adam and Eve’s reproductive potential produces a textual tension apparent in numerous places. Alluding to the actions of “our Grand Parents,” the opening lines of the epic suggest that procreation will figure prominently into the poem (1.29). Furthermore, the Father’s first words to Adam and the Father’s first words to Eve immediately allude to generation. Adam is called into consciousness with the pronouncement: “*Adam*, rise, / First Man, of Men innumerable ordain’d / First Father” (8.296–98), and Eve is drawn away from her own image and toward her husband with a similar promise of reproduction:

Follow me,  
 And I will bring thee where no shadow staies  
 Thy coming, and thy soft imbraces, hee  
 Whose image thou art, him thou shall enjoy  
 Inseparablie thine, to him shalt beare  
 Multitudes like thy self, and thence be call’d  
 Mother of human Race. (4.469–75)

Eve’s fertility is, in fact, her defining feature, evidenced by her very name, which means “Mother of all Mankind, / Mother of all things living” (11.159–60). Eve’s reproductive significance is reiterated on nu-

merous occasions; the first woman is named as the mother of humankind on eight separate occasions.<sup>15</sup>

As if to compensate for the fact that Adam's name, unlike Eve's, does not straightforwardly attest to his paternal role, the epic is even more insistent in applying epithets to Adam that emphasize his generative status. Adam is variously "our general Ancestor," "our Authour," "First Father," and "the Patriarch of Mankinde" (4.659, 5.397, 8.298, 9.376). Most commonly, however, he is referred to as "sire"—a characterization that occurs no less than nine times. In addition to being "our Sire" in 4.712, 8.39, 8.249, 11.460, and 12.467; Adam is "our general Sire" in 4.144; "our Primitive great Sire" in 5.350; and "Sire of men" in 8.218.

The elliptical prophecies of progeny expressed in these epithets are often expanded in the poem. Raphael expounds upon the pair's promised progeny as soon as he enters Eden, regaling Eve with her reproductive role:

Haile Mother of Mankind, whose fruitful Womb  
Shall fill the World more numerous with thy Sons  
Then with these various fruits the Trees of God  
Have heap'd this Table. (5.388–91)

The angel continues to remind his pupils of their promised offspring throughout his lecture, punctuating his instruction with allusions to "thy Race / In future dayes," and celebrating Adam and Eve's ability to "multiply a Race of Worshippers" (6.501–02, 7.630). Furthermore, Raphael's account of creation foregrounds the fact that Adam and Eve are fashioned primarily for propagation. According to the angel, the Father undertakes their creation with the explicit aim of raising "out of one man a Race / Of men innumerable" (7.155–56). Indeed, the Father's purpose dictates the physical forms given to Adam and Eve and the behavior expected of them. As Raphael tells Adam: "Male he created thee, but thy consort / Female for Race; then bless'd Mankinde, and said, / Be fruitful, multiplie, and fill the Earth" (7.529–31). Given the prominence of these reproductive prophecies, it is not surprising that even Satan turns seer. Upon first catching sight of Adam and Eve, the adversary predicts that they will one day give rise to "numerous offspring" (4.385).

In spite of the assurances—both devilish and divine—that Adam and Eve will soon give rise to an entire race, the epic fails to begin the business of begetting. Or, more accurately, the business of conceiving. From a propagative perspective, Adam and Eve's perfect union in Eden

is incomplete, for Eve fails to conceive a child by Adam for the duration of their habitation in the garden. Notwithstanding James Grantham Turner's complaint that such a state of affairs, "violates . . . the laws of biological probability," the epic is unapologetically explicit about Adam and Eve's childlessness.<sup>16</sup> As the newly fallen Adam laments his disobedience in Book Ten, he voices particular distress at the fact that his hapless descendants will be forced to shoulder the consequences of his sin. By way of rejoinder, Eve tells her husband that if the plight of his seed is to him most perplexing:

in thy power  
It lies, yet ere Conception to prevent  
The Race unblest, to being yet unbegot.  
Childless thou art, Childless remaine. (10.986–89)

Despite the totality of Edenic intimacy, Adam and Eve remain "childless"; the human race is "to being yet unbegot."

It is true that the couple's foretold descendants fill Adam's visions in Books Eleven and Twelve, but even this illusory realization of offspring is in the end denied. The vision is taken away, and Eden is once again unsettlingly empty. As the poem concludes, the narrator calls attention one final time to the couple's childlessness. The very last lines of the epic insist upon Adam and Eve's aloneness: "They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow, / Through *Eden* took thir solitarie way" (12.648–49).

But Adam and Eve are not alone in their barrenness. The celestial sex that Raphael attributes to angels in Book Eight is similarly sterile. Although Raphael explains that angels, like the innocent human couple, "enjoy / In eminence" the delights of "mixing," these heavenly "Union[s] of Pure with Pure" are so far from being reproductive that the possibility of angelic progeny is never even suggested (8.623–27).<sup>17</sup> Like prelapsarian Adam and Eve, unfallen angels are unable to reproduce themselves. Indeed, barrenness seems to be part and parcel of obedient existence.

Michael Lieb would perhaps disagree with this assertion, for he maintains that Adam and Eve are intensely involved in creation. According to Lieb, the prelapsarian pair repeatedly perform reproductive roles: "Adam and Eve . . . have a very important generative occupation: they effect on a minor scale what God effects on a major scale."<sup>18</sup> Lieb, for instance, explains that Adam and Eve "in their own way perform the creative act" by "effecting union" among the plants of Eden:

They support Nature's growth, supply a means by which the "Vine" may productively curl her "tendrils," "check" the "Fruitless imbraces" of Nature, so that those "imbraces" when properly bestowed may cause life to come forth. The underlying image undeniably relates to the basic sexual metaphor of propagation. Adam and Eve cause a wedding to occur between plant and plant, so that barrenness may be avoided. Consequently, there is a creating of fruitful growth through sexual union and a creative ordering of what is disordered as God creates life from Chaos.<sup>19</sup>

Although Lieb begins by asserting Adam and Eve's importance in the fertility of the Garden, the couple quietly drops out of his discussion, as if Lieb recognizes that their involvement in the reproductive operations of the Garden are largely insignificant. In the closing sentence of the above-cited paragraph it is important to note that Lieb reassigns creative responsibility, undermining Adam and Eve's alleged instrumentality in the fertility of Eden. In the end it is not Adam and Eve but rather God who "creates life from Chaos."

Although Lieb is correct to contend that Adam and Eve are constantly situated within an environment of fertile creativity and is also correct to contend that the epic encourages us to view the prelapsarian pair within this reproductive context, he errs when he tries to identify Adam and Eve with all this creation. Adam and Eve are indeed surrounded by "glorious creativity," but they are not themselves participants. It is for this reason that Lieb cannot illustrate Adam and Eve's involvement in creation with anything other than metaphorical abstractions—fruits and flowers—that spring not from the human couple but rather from the foliage of their paradisaal habitat. Adam and Eve are often described in parental terms and placed in what appear to be parental roles, but these moments only emphasize the distance between Adam and Eve and the fertility of Eden. The passages that endow Adam and Eve with abstract or imaginary children only emphasize their lack of actual offspring. References to children in Eden do not indicate their presence but rather point out their absence.

Lara Bovilsky shows this to be the case in Book Eight, when Eve excuses herself from Adam and Raphael's convoluted conversation in order to tend to a select group of flowers and herbs:

With lowliness Majestic from her seat,  
And Grace that won who saw to wish her stay,  
[Eve] Rose, and went forth among her Fruits and Flours,

To visit how they prosper'd, bud and bloom,  
 Her Nurserie; they at her coming sprung  
 And toucht by her fair tendance gladlier grew. (8.42–47)

Picking up on the maternal images embedded in this passage, Bovilsky explains that Eve's gardening is troped as a type of maternal care-giving. Because Eve has no real children that would allow her the opportunity to perform the offices of a mother, Bovilsky explains, "Eve contents herself with simulacra, lavishing maternal care on a small group of appreciative plants Milton calls 'her nursery'" (8.46). According to Bovilsky, "Eve's attention to her vegetable foundlings bolsters the reader's sense of her motherly instincts" and in this manner foregrounds the fact that Eve has no children on whom to exercise these maternal instincts. As Bovilsky writes: "The plant nursery gives the impression of misdirected energy, an empty rehearsal of skills which ought to be applied to human offspring."<sup>20</sup>

On several occasions Adam and Eve express anxiety about the tardiness of their "Nations yet unborn," causing us to consider their childlessness with discomfort (4.663). In Book 9, for instance, Eve remarks:

In such abundance lies our choice,  
 As leaves a greater store of Fruit untoucht,  
 Still hanging incorruptible, till men  
 Grow up to thir provision, and more hands  
 Help to disburden Nature of her Bearth. (9.620–24)

Eve's recognition that Eden is superfluously fertile calls attention to the absence of the "more hands" that have been promised. This absence is even more conspicuous in Book Four, when Adam and Eve praise God's bounty by noting:

Thy abundance wants  
 Partakers, and uncropt falls to the ground.  
 But thou hast promis'd from us two a Race  
 To fill the Earth, who shall with us extoll  
 Thy goodness infinite. (4.730–34)

Although Eve's speech in Book Nine leads us to believe that the untouched fruit "still hang[s] incorruptible," Adam's account presents a more disturbing depiction, asserting that the "uncropt" fruit "falls to the ground." Sullyng the idyllic image of Eden with the unwelcome suggestion of decomposition and decay, the uncropted abundance to which

Adam alludes causes us to wonder at the delayed arrival of Adam and Eve's descendants, an arrival which would prevent all this waste. Although Adam recuperates what might otherwise constitute a complaint with the conviction that the Father will eventually fulfill his promise of more mouths, the uncomfortable idea that Eden is overabundant and needs additional inhabitants is not entirely eased.

Indeed, the lack of offspring informs Eve's ill-advised proposal that she and Adam part company in order to increase their gardening efficiency:

*Adam*, well may we labour still to dress  
 This Garden, still to tend Plant, Herb and Flour,  
 Our pleasant task enjoyn'd, but till more hands  
 Aid us, the work under our labour grows,  
 Luxurious by restraint; what we by day  
 Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,  
 One night or two with wanton growth derides  
 Tending to wilde. (9.205–12)

Adam's response dismisses Eve's dismay and alleges an ability to keep up with the work enjoined upon them from above, but his reply nevertheless endorses Eve's claim that the Edenic labor force needs reinforcements:

These paths & Bowers doubt not but our joynt hands  
 Will keep from Wilderness with ease, as wide  
 As we need walk, till younger hands ere long  
 Assist us. (9.244–47)

Adam's confidence in their ability to oversee the Garden in Book Nine is perhaps undermined by the fact that he has earlier raised concerns identical to Eve's. It is Adam, after all, who observes that the Garden is "with branches overgrown, / That mock our scant manuring, and require / More hands than ours to lop thir wanton growth" (4.627–29). Noting the need for supplementary laborers, Adam's language incites a certain degree of uneasiness, for the embarrassment associated with the word "mock" creates an uncomfortable tension between the promise of children and the postponement of their arrival. This uneasiness underlies each of Adam and Eve's repeated observations about the need for offspring in Eden. If Eden "wants / Partakers," why do they never arrive? If Adam and Eve have been created "for Race" and commanded to "multiplie, and fill the Earth," why does their Edenic intimacy prove infertile?

The answer is to be found in Milton's conceptualization of deity. Since God's deity derives from his creative ability, the existence of creating creatures would in some sense compromise his unrivalled rule over the universe. When God alone operates as the agent of creation, structures of obedience are both simple and straightforward. If other individuals were to become involved in creation, however, the creation-based chain of command would become more complex. Expressing an unacknowledged impulse to prevent anyone other than the Father from participating in creation, Milton's epic marginalizes the Biblical command to multiply and replenish the earth. Although the prohibition to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is reiterated with every deific and angelic visitation and is the constant subject of Adam and Eve's conjugal conversations, the instruction to multiply and replenish is only mentioned twice in the entire epic. The first occurrence seems to be motivated by little more than Milton's fidelity to his sacred source text. Raphael's account of the earth's creation so closely follows the Genesis account that his repetition at this point of the command to "be fruitful, multiply, and fill the Earth" seems to be little more than a gesture toward biblical accuracy (7.531). The second time the command appears it is enclosed within an editorial intrusion, aimed at the reader rather than Adam and Eve: "Our Maker bids increase, who bids abstain / But our destroyer, foe to God and Man?" (4.748–49). Invoked to address contemporary sexual attitudes, the injunction to increase and multiply does not seem to apply to either Eden or Adam and Eve. This state of affairs is borne out by Adam's assertion that abstinence from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is "the only sign of our obedience" (4.428). Eve endorses this view, telling Satan that she cannot eat the forbidden fruit for "God so commanded, and left that Command / Sole Daughter of his voice" (9.652–53). Even the Father is involved in the erasure of the command to reproduce. He identifies the prohibition concerning the fruit as "the sole Command, / Sole pledge of [their] obedience" in 3.94–95, and in 7.47 again refers to "that sole command." Once uttered, the obligation to reproduce appears to fade almost entirely out of sight.

Because Milton's understanding of authority and authorship slackens the forcefulness of the prelapsarian command to multiply, Adam and Eve are more alarmed about their need to dress the Garden than they are about their charge to beget the human race. Their only allusions to reproduction subordinate propagation to gardening: They want offspring for no other reason than to better be able to care for Paradise. And as Adam and Eve discuss the nature of their work in the Garden, the epic's tendency to hinder, rather than foster, reproduction again re-

veals itself. The only “labour” Adam and Eve are to undergo has nothing to do with parturition. Rather, it is an attempt to deny increase. In various descriptions of their daily tasks, both Adam and Eve speak of curbing and constraining growth: “pruning,” “binding,” “lopping,” and giving “riddance” to vegetative shoots which “lie bestrown unsightly and unsmooth” (4.624–32; 9.210). At some unacknowledged level, the epic subtly strives to clamp down on creation, thereby preserving the Father’s unrivalled rule.

The epic’s underlying impulse to limit creation to God the Father further manifests itself in Milton’s ambivalent approach to his role as author. Although Milton yearns to call attention to himself as the poetic maker of *Paradise Lost*, this position threatens to place him in an adversarial relationship to God, for literary invention constitutes an act of creation troubling to Milton’s schema of authorship and authority. Because he does not share the monist logic that motivates Milton to define deity in terms of creation, Sir Philip Sidney is able to exult in the godlike creativeness apportioned to poets. Noting that other humanists and scientists are constrained by the realities of the natural world, Sidney jubilantly asserts the poet’s power to bring into existence new worlds and new realities:

The Poet, disdainyng to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his owne intention, dooth growe in effect into another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or quite anewe. . . . With the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing her dooings.<sup>21</sup>

Milton, however, cannot celebrate poetic creation in the same manner as Sidney. For Milton, God’s deity derives from his ability to create; consequently, God’s deity is to a certain degree diminished when anyone other than God is able to summon “the vigor of his owne intention” and give rise to a new world “with the force of a divine breath.” Within Milton’s formulation of deity, then, the assertion of poetic identity operates at some levels as a challenge to God the Father. If Milton were to assert his identity as author, he would concomitantly claim for himself the kind of authority that comes from authorship and present himself as a creative rival to the great Creator.

It is for this reason that in those passages where Milton calls attention to his role as an author he simultaneously strives to disavow that role. Thus, even as he boasts that his “adventrous Song” will “soar / Above th’ *Aonian* Mount, while it pursues / Things unattempted yet in

Prose or Rhime,” Milton relinquishes ownership of the song, indicating that it will not be sung by him but rather by the “Heav’nly Muse” (1.6–16). Championing himself as a challenger to classical authors, Milton argues for the superiority of his brand of heroism, yet concludes the self-promoting passage with the admission that both his subject matter and his style belong not to him but to the celestial emissary “who brings it nightly to my Ear” (9.47). Indeed, Milton suggests at one point that his input is so unnecessary to the composition of the epic that he does not even need to be conscious. The Muse, Milton writes, “dictates to me slumbring” (9.23). Again and again, Milton’s rhetoric of bold poetic innovation mingles with the meek language of divine inspiration. Although Milton’s frequent claims to be inspired by God are often construed as a means of increasing the authority of his text, elevating it to a quasi-scriptural status, these passages also function as a renunciation of authority. Stipulating that the text originates with God rather than with him, Milton effectively surrenders his authorship to God, thereby stepping out of the role of rival creator. Because Milton’s understanding of divine authority links deity to creation, it implicitly encourages him to limit creation to the Creator. In the same way that this unacknowledged impulse problematizes Milton’s model of Eden, it also troubles his view of poetic composition. Just as Milton’s desire to rejoice in the fertility of Adam and Eve is tempered by a disinclination to allow anyone other than the Father to create life, Milton’s desire to assert his authorial status is mitigated by a reluctance to recognize any author aside from God. Accordingly, Milton’s mode of self-representation oscillates between self-aggrandizement and self-diminution. Piously submitting to the tacit tenets of his monist logic, Milton often divests himself of both agency and identity in the authorship of his epic, characterizing himself as little more than the passive recipient of a divine dictation.

Satan, however, would like nothing more than to unsettle God’s sovereignty by establishing himself as an alter-author. Upon first entering Eden, Satan immediately perceives the implicit strictures it places on reproduction, calling attention to the Garden’s “narrow limits” (4.384).<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Satan also seems to see the reasons for these restrictions. Accordingly, he chooses to challenge the Father’s sovereignty by exploiting the subversive potentiality of the propagative ability given to Adam and Eve. The adversary vows to release and increase the fertility that the Father’s rule finds it beneficial to regulate:

Hell shall unfold,  
To entertain you two, her widest Gates,

And send forth all her Kings; there will be room,  
 Not like these narrow limits, to receive  
 Your numerous offspring. (4.381–85)

And Satan is uniquely qualified to stimulate procreation. In marked contrast to the barrenness of Adam and Eve, Satan displays throughout the epic a startling virility. He gives birth to Sin suddenly, unintentionally, and dramatically. As Sin recounts:

All on a sudden miserable pain  
 Supris'd thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzie swumm  
 In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast  
 Threw forth, till on the left side op'ning wide,  
 Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright,  
 Then shining heav'nly fair, a Goddess arm'd  
 Out of thy head I sprung: amazement seis'd  
 All th' Host of Heav'n. (2.752–59)

The angels' amazement most likely arises from the fact that they have just witnessed the first creative act undertaken by anyone other than the Father. Satan's acts of authorship, however, are just starting. Four lines after creating Sin, Satan impregnates her. After the briefest of gestations ("but long I sat not"), Death erupts from Sin's womb, "breaking violent way" (2.778–82). Death, sharing in his father's virility, hits the ground running, chasing and raping his own mother: Sin has no sooner named his first child than she is once again conceiving and delivering, this time giving birth not to a single son but rather to an entire "cry of Hell Hounds" (2.654). In less than fifty lines, Satan's progeny has reached three generations. The first creature to reproduce, Satan does so with explosive fecundity.

When Michael encounters the adversary on the fields of heaven, his bitter reproach points to this excessive fertility as well as to the distress it generates. Applying to Satan an epithet previously applicable only to the Father, the infuriated archangel reveals that Satan's creativeness has upset the hierarchical order of heaven:

Author of evil, unknown till thy revolt,  
 Unnam'd in Heav'n, now plenteous, . . .  
 . . .  
 . . . how hast thou disturb'd  
 Heav'ns blessed peace, and into Nature brought  
 Miserie, uncreated till the crime  
 Of thy Rebellion? (6.262–63, 266–69)

Satan's acts of creation trouble the "blessed peace" of the Father's kingdom, for the adversary's authorship endows him with authority. As Sin avows, Satan's offspring are not bound to obey God the Father. They owe their obedience to the adversary, for he has brought them into existence: "Thou art my Father, thou my Author, thou / My being gav'st me; whom should I obey / But thee, whom follow?" (2.864–66) Introducing into the universe a number of subjects loyal not to the Father but rather to him, Satan undermines the Father's universal sovereignty.

Indeed, Satan's most fearsome weapon is his ability to create, an ability that Raphael suggests when he identifies Satan as the "great Potentate; for great indeed / His name, and high was his degree in Heav'n" (5.706–07). Although the angel chooses to emphasize the "great" part of the epithet ("for great indeed . . ."), the second part of the epithet is equally important, for the word "potent" that is visible in and etymologically significant to the word "Potentate" pinpoints the source of Satan's power.

The adversary's potency is such that the celestial re-structuring he effects extends even beyond those beings he has literally begotten. He encourages an entire multitude to turn from their Father. The success of his deception depends in large part upon his ability to cover up the origin of the Father's might. Satan tells his followers, for instance, that "he who reigns / Monarch in Heav'n" is "upheld by old repute, / Consent, or custome" (1.637–40). Enumerating possible sources of God's sovereignty—reputation, consent of the governed, tradition—Satan carefully leaves out the one source that is sufficient to legitimize the Father's rule—creation.<sup>23</sup> Teaming this rhetorical strategy of concealment with the bold concept of self-creation, Satan persuades a third of the angels to break with God. The adversary convinces his clan to replace the celestial family tree with a number of self-sprouting shoots. In this manner, he erases authentic genealogical obligations and re-draws angelic allegiances according to lies and falsehoods. Accepting Satan as their leader, the fallen angels supplant the "Author of all being" with a demonic alter-creator, "the Author of all ill" (3.374; 2.381).

As soon as they give to Satan the obedience that they owe the Father, the fallen angels cease to be known as the "Sons of Heaven" and begin to be known as the offspring of Satan, or the "sons of Darkness" (1.654; 6.715). "Ofspring" is the exact label Michael applies to Satan's "wicked crew" during the war in heaven. Opposing the adversary on the field of battle, the enraged archangel thunders: "Hence then, and evil go with thee along / Thy ofspring, to the place of evil, Hell, / Thou and thy wicked crew" (6.275–77). Although the Son eventually fulfills Michael's wish to exile Satan and his adoptive children, the threat to divine order

is not thereby relieved. Only temporarily confined to Hell, Satan soon escapes his prison and intrudes upon Eden.

Entering Eden with the exclusive aim of inciting disobedience, Satan reiterates for Eve the very claims of self-creation that have won for him a third of the hosts of Heaven. Recognizing that Eve obeys the Father out of respect for his authority as her author, Satan impugns the Father's role as creator. In the same way that Satan licenses his own disobedience by denying that God created him, Satan seeks to legitimize Eve's eating of the fruit by suggesting to her that she does not owe her life to the Father. Referring to God merely as "the Threatner," the adversary avoids those epithets that would identify the Father as Eve's creator and master (9.687). Preaching the demonic doctrine of self-creation and self-determination, Satan tells Eve that God is not her author:

The Gods are first, and that advantage use  
On our belief, that all from them proceeds;  
I question it, for this fair Earth I see,  
Warm'd by the Sun, producing every kind,  
Them nothing. (9.718–22)

Satan also attempts to introduce into Eve's mind incorrect models of deity. Although the epic makes clear the fact that God's sovereignty stems from his omnipotent ability to create, Satan suggests that deity derives from other attributes. He claims, for instance, that deity is a function of beauty. According to Satan, Eve is so fair that she "shouldst be seen / A Goddess among Gods, ador'd and serv'd / By Angels numberless, thy daily Train" (9.546–48). Presenting beauty as the principal criterion of godliness, Satan displaces the correct conception of deity with a false model that encourages Eve to install herself in the same category as God. In a more subtle attack, Satan asserts that God is God because he is just. Once he has linked God's deity to his justness, Satan can then topple the Father from his throne with the simple syllogism: "God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just; / Not just, not God" (9.700–01). Once deity is unmoored from its creational foundation, Satan is free to manipulate universal structures of authority. Forwarding false notions of divinity, he invites Eve to conceive of herself as master rather than subject. Referring to Eve as "sovrän Mistress," "Empress of this fair World," "Queen of this Universe," and "Goddess humane," Satan tries to cover up the identity of the authentic ruler of the universe, urging Eve to impose herself in the Father's place (9.532, 568, 684, 732).

Eve demonstrates her increasing acceptance of Satan's devilish ideas of deity by altering the way in which she refers to God. Throughout the

epic Eve has customarily called the Father “Creator” or “Maker.” As the Temptation proceeds, however, she foregoes that form of nominalization in order to adopt Satan’s mode of address. Describing God as “Our great Forbidder,” Eve echoes Satan’s allusion to God as “the Threatner” (9.815, 687). Subscribing to Satan’s skepticism, Eve comes to question the sovereignty of the Father. When Eve loses sight of the Creator-creature relationship that governs her existence, she disowns her Maker and shrugs off her creaturely obligations to him. As God himself explains, Eve disobeys as a result of her having been “flatter’d out of all, believing lies / Against [her] Maker” (10.42–43).

After she has eaten the forbidden fruit, Eve demonstrates the self-deluded depths to which she has sunk, for she inverts the universal hierarchy wherein creatures worship creators. Although she admits that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is a created object, she nevertheless lavishes upon it “low Reverence” (9.835). Reversing the system of creation-based sovereignty, Eve acclaims the “Created” as “Sovran” (9.795–99).

At the conclusion of her idolatrous adoration, Eve returns to Adam, who immediately intuits her sinful condition. Adam’s horror at his spouse’s act soon gives way to his own act of disobedience. Unlike the fully deceived Eve, though, Adam transgresses “against his better knowledge” (9.998). Adam’s lesser degree of deception is evident in his ruminations prior to partaking of the fruit. In contrast to Eve, Adam does not eschew the correct view of God in order to embrace Satan’s theory that God is a “Threatner” who underhandedly uses the fact of his priority to convince all other existents that he is their source and, thus, their sovereign. Rejecting Satan’s position of self-creation, Adam continues to insist upon his created status, referring to himself and his spouse as the Father’s “prime Creatures” and “his Works” (9.940–41). Whereas Eve abandons the Father’s proper title of “Creator,” Adam continues to refer to God in this fashion. Nevertheless, Adam now qualifies the epithet in a way that demonstrates his willingness to compromise what he knows to be true in order to please Eve. Vitiating the correct view of the Father (Creator) with the Satanic view of the Father that Eve now endorses (Forbidder/Threatener), Adam calls God “Creator wise, / Though threatening” (9.938–39). Adam testifies to the Father’s authority (“Creator wise”) even as he undermines it with additional commentary (“though threatening”) and unlawful actions (eating the fruit). Although Adam never forgets that God is his creator, he shows himself willing to transgress this knowledge even as he witnesses to its truth. Thus, Adam eats “not deceav’d, / But fondly overcome with Femal charm” (9.998–99).

Once he has sinned, however, Adam flirts with the Satanic viewpoint he has repudiated prior to the Fall. In the same way that Satan seeks to justify his rebellion by denying the Father's authorship, Adam tries to downplay his disobedience by contesting the conditions of his creation:

Did I request thee, Maker, from my Clay  
To mould me Man, did I sollicite thee  
From darkness to promote me, or here place  
In this delicious Garden? (10.743–46)

Whereas Satan spurns the suggestion that God created him at all, Adam only accuses God of creating without the proper consent. The difference is monumental. Satan's outright refusal to acknowledge God's paternity allows for a sustained posture of disobedience. Because Adam only questions the manner in which God creates him rather than the fact that God has created him, Adam is unable to continue in his obdurate attitude. Adam cannot persist in his protestations against God's sovereignty insofar as he accepts God's identity as Creator. As long as he acknowledges his author, Adam cannot evade his essential obligations to that author. This relationship is perfectly encapsulated in the passage that concludes Adam's complaints concerning the conditions of his creation. The fallen man explains to himself:

God made thee of choice his own, and of his own  
To serve him, thy reward was of his grace,  
Thy punishment then justly is at his Will.  
Be it so, for I submit, his doom is fair. (10.766–69)

Admitting that the Father made him ("God made thee of choice his own") Adam is compelled to abandon his obstinacy and submit to his maker: "Be it so, for I submit, his doom is fair." Adam's submission soon culminates in penitent supplication, a petition for forgiveness that ushers in an era of grace and redemption. Unlike Satan, Adam never doubts the Father's role in his genesis. It is his unwavering belief in God's creative ability that ultimately impels him to do something of which Satan is incapable—repent.

Thus, the difference between redemption and damnation, the distance between Satan's perpetual imprisonment and Adam's eventual exaltation, is in many ways reducible to the beliefs each espouses concerning God's role in creation. Adam recognizes that God is the universal Creator; Satan vehemently denies God's creative hand. Satan's denial constitutes nothing less than a rejection of God because the ability to create

constitutes the defining attribute of deity in Milton's monist universe. Creation is crucial to *Paradise Lost* because the power to give life, rather than a divine ousia or essence, operates as the primary identifier of the one and only true God. Everything in the epic hinges on acts of divine authorship because authorship establishes divinity.

## NOTES

This essay has grown out of observations that Lara Bovilsky shared with me several years ago; I am indebted to her for giving me a beginning. Leigh DeNeef, Roy Flannagan, Maureen Quilligan, and Laurie Shannon were kind enough to read early drafts of this work. I would also like to thank Paul Parrish, my reader at the *South Central Review*, for his valuable suggestions for revision.

1. W.B.C. Watkins, *An Anatomy of Milton's Verse* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), 44–46.

2. Michael Lieb, *The Dialectics of Creation* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 10 n.10.

3. Lieb, *Dialectics of Creation*, 7.

4. All references to *Paradise Lost*, cited parenthetically by book and line number, come from the *Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

5. Michael Bauman, *Milton's Arianism*, Sprache und Literatur Series, vol. 26 (Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, 1987), 86.

6. Bauman, *Milton's Arianism*, 86–87.

7. In a separate essay I examine these ideas as they manifest themselves in the *Christian Doctrine*, Milton's theological treatise. Drawing upon the doctrinal pronouncements made therein, I discuss in greater detail the way in which Milton's concept of God diverges from orthodox theology, and the manner in which his monism impels him to adopt a creation-based concept of deity. See "Deity and Creation in the *Christian Doctrine*," *Milton Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (December 2001): 232–44.

8. Stephen B. Dobranski, *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22–23.

9. Dobranski, *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade*, 18. Significantly, the title page of Milton's 1645 *Poems* makes just such a claim, advertising that the poems of Mr. John Milton are "Printed by his true Copies."

10. Mark Rose, "The Author as Proprietor: *Donaldson v. Becket* and the Genealogy of Modern Authorship," *Representations* 23 (Summer 1988): 55; John Milton, *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, eds. Don M. Wolfe et al., 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–82), 2:570.

11. Milton, *Complete Prose Works*, 3:365.

12. Regina M. Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating: Biblical Creation in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1.

13. Although Philip Gallagher's reading of *Paradise Lost* does not address Milton's idea of deity, it is interesting to note that Gallagher believes the precise moment of Satan's sin to be the instance in which he utters the doctrine of self-raising. After citing Satan's claim to be "self-begot" and "self-raised" in 3.859–63, Gallagher exclaims: "This is sin's moment . . . [This] denial of origins originates both Satan and his sin. . . . By repudiating his creaturely contingency, Lucifer becomes sin-full in deed, a once-

and-for-all metamorphosis.” Philip J. Gallagher, *Milton, the Bible, and Misogyny*, eds. Eugene R. Cunnar and Gail L. Mortimer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 90.

14. Francis C. Blessington, “‘That Undisturbed Song of Pure Conccent’: Paradise Lost and the Epic-Hymn,” in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 485–86.

15. See 1.36; 4.475; 4.492; 5.388; 9.644; 11.159; 11.160; and 12.624.

16. James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 37.

17. The exception of Satan and his progeny will be taken up later.

18. Lieb, *Dialectics of Creation*, 73.

19. Lieb, *Dialectics of Creation*, 73.

20. Lara Bovilsky, “‘Female for Race’: Pregnancy in *Paradise Lost*,” in *Inroads: Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Duke University Women’s Studies Graduate Research Conference*, ed. Kate Manuel (Durham: Duke University Program in Women’s Studies, 1997), 131.

21. Sir Philip Sidney, *Defence of Poesie, Astrophil and Stella and Other Writings*, ed. Elizabeth Porges Watson (Boston: Everyman Library/Tuttle Publishing, 1997), 88–89.

22. Although Satan’s opinions about Eden are often unreliable, his understanding of Eden’s closeness is seconded by one of the epic’s most authoritative voices. Michael also calls attention to the strictures of Paradise, referring to the Garden as “these narrow bounds confin’d” (11.341).

23. Unfallen Adam is a perfect foil on this point. When asking Raphael to describe for him the origins of the universe, Adam details all of the information about which he is ignorant. While Satan makes certain to never acknowledge God-as-Creator, Adam expends similar effort to never *not* acknowledge God-as-Creator. When asking about the origin of the universe, Adam carefully crafts his questions so as to never put into doubt the Father’s identity as the universal author. Wanting to know more about his cosmic surroundings, Adam requests that Raphael reveal “How this World / Of Heav’n and Earth conspicuous first began, / When, and whereof created, for what cause” (7.62–64). Adam throws open every aspect of creation—when, why, how, and of what substance—but never poses the primary question—who. He conscientiously refuses to deny the Creator, just as Satan consistently refuses to recognize his Maker.