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The Mysterious Genesis of *Paradise Lost*

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A poem or any other product of mental labor (such as this essay) naturally lends itself to procreative metaphors. It seems to have dwelled—or to give promise of being about to have dwelled—within us for months, first as little more than an anxious gleam in its parent's eye, a promise expressed genially with little forethought to its implications, then gathering mass and energy (figuratively in the mind, or more literally in the computer's womb) as months wear on and the deadline approaches, and finally thrusting itself forth into a potentially hostile environment with a violent peristalsis that belies its own sense of vulnerability. And once the child is born, parents and friends—authors and readers—cluster round and speculate on the origins of its features. Behind this harmless exercise in identifying family traits lies a more somber awareness that the dead live on in the genetic markings of the living: *non omnis moriar*, not all of me will perish if I have been productive.

Of course, there are inconsistencies or paradoxes inherent in this ruling metaphor when applied to poetry. Most notably, it is usually a male poet who gives birth, and he is likely to be rather vague as to the means by which the fetus was engendered in his male womb. Perhaps it was one of the Muses, daughters of Jove and Memory, who entered his breast or whispered in his ear; perhaps he was overborne by the literary tradition, generic constraints, or the influence of some prior artist. Donald W. Foster has recently reminded us that it was customary in the early modern period for printers to refer to the author himself as the "onlie begetter" of his poems; but it is hardly surprising that generations of readers tried to take this phrase, when applied to Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, as pointing instead to the young man who is supposed to have inspired at least some of them.[1]

When we learn from Foster that the mysterious Master W. H. is most likely only Master W. SH., with the 'S' having dropped out of the forme, we may feel somewhat dismayed by the thought that not only these poems but perhaps all our declarations and analyses of love are equally self-engendered, equally solipsistic projections. But I am afraid that this insight must have been quite congenial to a Shakespeare who so delighted in questioning the conventions of his stage, turning his characters' soliloquies into fantasies of self-representation and consequent self-delusion rather than conventional transmissions of fact.

As heir to the multifarious richnesses of the English Renaissance, John Milton inherited his predecessors' self-conscious skepticism about the transparency of language. In "Il Penseroso," he aspires to hear "the Muses in a ring, / Ay round about Jove's altar sing" (47-48), and presents a portrait of the poet as relatively passive in receiving, transmitting, and adding to the tradition—'authorship' here in its presumed derivation from *augeo, auctus*, augment.[2] The tradition of choral song he invokes is conspicuously rooted in specific writings by his Elizabethan predecessors: in his project of augmentation, the melancholy Penseroso would "raise Musaeus from his bower" (104), as Marlowe had done in his unfinished *Hero and Leander*, and "call up him that left half-told / The story of Cambuscan bold" (109-10)—thereby recalling both Chaucer whose Squire's tale was broken off, and Spenser who finished that tale but left his own half-told after six books of *The Faerie Queene*. The conclusion to "Il Penseroso" is similarly intertextual: "These pleasures Melancholy give, / And I with thee will choose to live." As editors have noted, the endings of both of Milton's paired poems echo the proposal of Marlowe's passionate shepherd, as well as Ralegh's and other poets' responses to it.

These early poems show Milton flirting with the conventional Muses of Elizabethan poetry (whom he chooses to name Mirth and Melancholy, though he glances as well at their classical functions and categories), but stopping well short of a commitment to either or any of them. These poems are 'masterpieces' chiefly in the earlier, literal sense of apprentice works that demonstrate the young artist's mastery of his craft and assimilation of the lessons of his masters. I begin by citing them because I want to

consider an elaboration of this same tendency toward polysemous intertextuality in Milton's later and far darker epic.

Paradise Lost is at once a retelling of Genesis and a rehearsing—with passionate urgency—of the poet's sense of his origins and of his claims to originality. If we look at a few familiar moments in the poem, under the rubric of "Poetry as Procreation," I think we can gain a fresh perspective on Milton's brooding treatment of poetic creativity. Consider, for instance, his proposal to pursue "Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme" (1.16). Modern editors note that Milton "ironically paraphrases," as both Hughes and Fowler put it,[3] the opening of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, promising "Cosa non detta in prosa mai, né in rima" (1.2), and explain the passage by reference to 9.28-31, where Milton disparages the traditional subject matter of epic as

> Wars, hitherto the only Argument
> Heroic deem'd, chief maistry to dissect
> With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights
> In Battles feign'd . . . .

Their explanation is that Milton is mocking Ariosto's claim to originality, disparaging both the traditional matter of epic, warfare, and the 'tinsel Trappings' of romance, in favor of the "better fortitude / Of Patience and Heroic martyrdom" (31-32) his predecessors had left unsung.

Yet, while it is true that Milton's poem *praises* patience, and looks forward to Christ's passion to redeem the Fall, it is a bit of a stretch to claim that this is his Subject. If we recall the context of Ariosto's presentation of his own subject, we observe that he too explicitly breaks with the Virgilian epic matter, by talking not of Arms and the Man, but of men and women, wars and loves (1.1)—in fact, of something very close to this allegedly unattempted subject of Milton's own poem. In short, then, the echo of Ariosto at the opening of Book 1 suggests that the story of Adam's Fall, like that of Orlando's love-madness (and the mortal fury of Seneca's Hercules, recalled by Ariosto's choice of title), is—or at least risks turning into—a love tragedy, the story of a man driven to fatal distraction by love. When the poet aspires to soar in adventurous song but fears he is doomed

to fall, fears that "an age too late, or cold / Climate, or Years [may] damp my intended wing / Deprest" (9.44-46), we can recognize parallels between the poet and his fallen protagonists, between his own ambitious project and the causes of their falls.

These parallels are clearly present from the opening lines of the poem, though they become more explicit in the invocations to later books. The failure of the Commonwealth, and his own personal blindness, are understood from the start to be signs of the poet's apparent exclusion from divine favor and illumination, though they may also be interpreted *in bono* as evidence of his role—like Moses —to teach the new children of Israel, and—like other blind bards such as Homer or Tiresias—to testify to a truth the sighted cannot perceive. Invoking a Heavenly Muse superior to those of the benighted gentiles, he identifies her knowledge with the creative power of God:

> Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
> Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
> Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
> And mad'st it pregnant . . . . (1.19-22)

These lines address—and if anything, complicate further—the confusion of roles that I spoke of earlier as being inherent to the metaphor of poetic procreation. A bird sits brooding on a fertilized egg, she doesn't make it pregnant by virtue of her brooding; incubation is not insemination. If the dove-like aspect of God's creativity—easily recognized here by virtue of the conventional image of the Holy Spirit—is presented as working in a different manner than with other winged creatures, Milton is calling attention to this disparity. Fowler notes that this is "not a mixed metaphor, but a deliberate allusion to the Hermetic doctrine that God is both masculine and feminine."[4] I would say instead that it is a deliberately mixed metaphor *because* it alludes to this doctrine and invites us to consider its singularity. Simultaneously, too, it alludes to other creation myths which derive the earth from an egg, and to the visual art of the period which gives an egg-shaped mass to depictions of chaos. Most pertinently of all, Fowler

notes (ibid.) a simile developed by Sylvester in his translation of Du Bartas' hexaemeral epic:

> As a good Wit . . . on his Book still muses:
> . . . Or, as a Hen that fain would hatch a Brood,
> . . . Even in such sort seemed the Spirit Eternall
> To brood upon this Gulf.

Milton corrects Sylvester, that is, by insisting that this Spirit is not just hatching a brood that was engendered by another, but is engendering it him- and herself. And musing on his own book, Milton requires the aid of that same Spirit as his Muse and declines to presume a similarity in brooding.

But again, here as with the Ariosto parallel mentioned earlier, Milton is not simply providing an ironic parody that marks his difference from the other poet. Silvester himself had distinguished the good Wit that muses and the hen that really does brood from the Spirit Eternal that only *seemed* to brood. Milton's revision of the earlier play on brooding and breeding brings into play the resonance that results from the two senses of 'brood'. From the darkness of his blindness and failure, the poet broods on the chaos of his fallen world and prays to have his darkness illumined, his lowness raised and supported, so that he too can give birth to an order that imitates and confirms God's. Like the penseroso earlier, he calls for help that he cannot be sure Providence will supply. The tone of these lines is sombre and anxious, and owes much, I think, to the poet's mastery of the dramatic effects achieved by the soliloquies of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. It prepares us, of course, for the more fully developed appeal to "holy Light" that will come at the opening of Book 3 when the poet aspires to move from Hell to Heaven, from fallen to unfallen perspectives.

Milton is quick to insist from the outset on his awareness of the anxieties that a skeptical reader might express in approaching a work that presumes to "justify the ways of God to men"—as if such ways either needed justification or indeed *could* be justified by reason, measured by rational standards, rather than taken on faith. Andrew Marvell's dedicatory poem

(added to the second edition) expresses the fear that "the poet blind, yet bold" might

> ruin . . .
> The sacred truths to fable and old song
> (So Sampson groped the Temple's post in spite)
> The world o'erwhelming to revenge his sight. (1-10)

The point of Marvell's wit here depends on our recognition that this is of course a misleading characterization of Samson's story, to the degree that his destruction of Dagon's temple was divinely willed rather than a simple act of vengeful spite, while at the same time knowing that the blind Milton had indeed already turned the story into a tragedy in which personal motivation was bound to take precedence over divine will.

It is not always easy to separate sacred truth from fable in the stories of the Hebrew Bible; Milton is typically drawn to the harder cases like those of Adam or Samson. An instance that has proved especially difficult for modern readers occurs in the catalogue of Fallen Angels in Book 1, which concludes with the lewd and gross Belial, who may owe his pride of placement to his resembling the cavaliers of Milton's day:

> . . . when night
> Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
> Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.
> Witness the streets of Sodom, and that night
> In Gibeah, when the hospitable door
> Exposed a matron to avoid worse rape. (1.500-05)

What is most notable about this passage is its conflation of two stories of forbidden lust and violated hospitality. The more familiar, and somewhat less difficult story, is that of Lot and his angelic guests in Genesis 19: the Sodomites demand that Lot give them his guests "that we may know them" but like a good host Lot demurs and urges them to take his two virginal daughters instead. When they insist, they are blinded and God rains vengeance on the city, after providing for the escape of His faithful servant and family.

A partial parallel to this story of homosexual lust and violated hospitality occurs in Judges 19. There, an unnamed Levite comes with his concubine to the Benjamite town of Gibeah and receives hospitality from a single old man. When "certain sons of Belial" come to the old man's house and demand to know his guest, the old man offers instead his own virginal daughter along with his guest's concubine. The men take the concubine and fatally rape her; the Levite then takes her body home with him and divides it "together with her bones, into twelve pieces," and sends them to all the tribes of Israel. When the united Israelites fail to persuade the children of Benjamin to deliver up the guilty sons of Belial they kill thousands of Benjamites before finally making peace with them.

Milton's characterization of this latter story as affirming the sacredness of hospitality—the hospitable door exposing a matron to prevent worse rape—begs a number of issues that are raised here but not in the second story of Lot. We might well feel that we have to accept as a given that the Jewish Bible (and hence the Judaeo-Christian tradition) considers homosexual acts to be, ipso facto, 'worse' than heterosexual because unnatural; and the story of Lot implies, to be sure, that he was being a good host in offering his own daughters to the rapists rather than surrendering his guests. In Gibeah, however, the issue of hospitality scarcely arises, for the host surrenders his guest's 'matron' rather than one of his own women. This entire episode in the book of Judges is replete with confusing turns. The Levite is on the road in the first place because his concubine had "played the whore against him" by returning to her father's house and he has had to bring her back. The story turns into one of a breach in the tribes of Israel which must be repaired by the surviving Benjamites seizing wives among the daughters of Shiloh when the Israelites have sworn not to give them wives. No wonder, we might feel, that Milton wearily ends his catalogue of the demons at this point—"The rest were long to tell."

I would suggest that Milton's casual or partial summation of the incident in Gibeah, anticlimactically concluding a list of far more substantial diabolisms, introduces a leit-motif of misogynistic anxiety that will sound throughout the main action of *Paradise Lost*. Milton is wrestling with a tradition of the Fall whereby the guilt falls primarily on Eve. If we are ready

to accept without any qualms this casual exposure of a matron to avoid worse rape, it follows that we will feel that Adam too should have allowed Eve to die without taking death into himself. In Judges, the rape of the Levite's concubine is an incident rather like the rape of Helen, a *casus belli* that ignores the whorishness of the woman who must be brought home at whatever cost, to redeem male honor. The story makes only a token gesture toward sexual morality or hospitality while veering into larger issues of *realpolitik*, the compromised union of the tribes of Israel, at a time when, as the Book's final verse puts it, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

We might suggest that in creating his poem, Milton finds himself forced to mediate between two kinds of making: the Divine creation which proceeds without sexual difference, and human procreation which requires it. As we have seen, the opening lines of the poem address a Heavenly Muse that is feminine in manner, dovelike and brooding, but exists without sexual difference, impregnating as well as fostering—in short, that Holy Spirit whose existence as a separate person in the Trinity Milton had argued against in *De doctrina* i.6. Yet, although Milton tries his best to believe in a God that is One, his treatment of the Father and Son—a relationship that is essential to generating the War in Heaven and the consequent need for earth and mankind—repeatedly exposes the absence of the third figure in the nuclear heavenly household. Mary, the Mother of God, or at least the mother of God-made-Man, can come into existence only after, and as a consequence of, the Fall; and although we might expect Milton's Protestantism to ignore or downplay her role, she is conspicuously part of a feminine absence that resonates through the poem. The 'matron' in Gibeah who is exposed, violated, and dismissed so cavalierly in two lines of Book I anticipates the matronly aspect into which Eve will grow, as mother of us all; the Old Testament story even hints at the mystery of the Eucharist, since the distribution of her broken body will unite the twelve tribes of Israel, albeit in war. Her rape marks a gap in Milton's own argument that will only be made whole at the poem's end.

Milton begins his poem—as readers have widely recognized and variously described—with an acute sense of his own fallen state. He thrusts

himself and the reader into the middle of the fallen condition, aligning his (and our) first view of it with that of Satan and the other fallen angels. The poem's apparent empathy for the devil, at least in its opening books, has been too widely noted and debated to necessitate rehearsing here; whether or not Milton was of Satan's party, as Blake would claim, he clearly presents himself as sharing with the fallen angels a sense of darkness and estrangement from the divine. When he moves from Hell to Heaven at the beginning of Book 3, his hymn to "holy Light" is freighted with the sense of dark brooding that is willing a creativity that may not occur. He is the wakeful bird, the raped Philomel turned into the nightingale, who "Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid / Tunes her nocturnal note" (3.38-40). Yet, like the singer of the *Pervigilium Veneris*, he immediately goes on to declare that he is not a part of that fertile world that moves his harmonious numbers: "Thus with the year / Seasons return, but not to me returns / Day . . . / But cloud instead, and ever-during dark / Surrounds me . . ." (3.40-45).

Milton's invocation in Book 3 of the light of Heaven, "offspring of heaven first-born" but also the primal generative force itself, is matched by Satan's despairing and adversarial address to the same sun at the beginning of Book 4. The two monologues are tellingly different, but they link Satan and the poet in a common theme of estrangement, both of them echoing the famous opening soliloquy in *Richard III* where Richard both laments and celebrates his apartness from the royal sun of York, "determined to prove a villain" in the senses both of his willed subversion of the state and his being a victim of an external determinism as well. Although Milton differs from Satan in praying for atonement with the Almighty, he resembles him in his acute sense of estrangement.

Milton's difficulties in expressing this light "unblam'd" are embodied in the dramatic problems of the heavenly council in Book 3, which has disturbed many readers since it presents a divine Father whose foreknowledge of the Fall aggravates those questions of human free will that He is trying to answer for us. Readers are likely to feel that they have been left behind with the more intellectual of the fallen angels at the end of the infernal council in Book 2, reasoning high "Of providence, foreknowledge,

will and fate, / Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute, / And [finding] no end, in wandering mazes lost" (2.559-61). Milton has further underscored this problem by presenting a pair of council scenes in adjacent books, one presumably bad and one good, but both of them directed by a single powerful chairman who has predetermined the outcome. At the end of the first Satan volunteers to visit earth, at the end of the second the Son volunteers something that seems dangerously, blasphemously similar, and like Satan confirms his authority by so doing.

The first books of *Paradise Lost*, then, dramatize a pair of fallen conditions, that of the angels which precedes and necessitates the creation and temptation of Adam and Eve and that of poet and reader whose knowledge will be the consequence of the poem's foreknown action. Milton's brooding on his personal abyss as well as on the mysterious confluence of motives in the story he is to tell engenders the poem we are reading; but the movement from Hell to Paradise and eastward from Eden accompanies that other fallen creature, Satan, and shares his burdens.

The principal figure of procreation in the first part of the poem appears at the end of Book 2, when Satan encounters Sin and Death at the gates of hell. Sin's birth from the head of Satan recalls that of Athene from the head of Zeus, traditionally compared by Christian writers to that of the Son of God from His Father. As an explicitly allegorical figure, Sin clearly recalls the milieu of *The Faerie Queene* and Errour in particular, whom the Red Cross Knight encounters at the beginning of his quest. Like Redcrosse, Satan at first recoils in horror from this monstrous female form, seeming "woman to the waist, and fair, / But [ending] foul in many a scaly fold / Voluminous and vast, a serpent armed / With mortal sting" (2.650-53). A figure of monstrous fecundity whose hell hounds surround her waist and creep in and out of her womb, she is a carefully developed elaboration of Spenser's Errour (*F.Q.*, 1.1.14-26). Once recognized, she is greeted by Satan as his "Dear Daughter"—dear too in the mortal price of his Sin—rather as Spenser's own creatures of darkness delight in their kinship; but we and the narrator are clearly meant to react with continuing horror at her aspect.

As Michael Lieb has shown in great detail,[5] Milton associates Satan throughout with images of perverse sexuality that contrast with the unfallen naturalism of Adam and Eve in the Garden, performing their "rites / Mysterious of connubial love" (4.742-43). I would add that the obvious derivation of Sin from Spenser's Errour serves to remind us that she stands not simply for another's sin but more generally for the condition of wandering that we experience as pilgrims or knights-errant in seeking illumination. Her folds voluminous are comparable to "Errours endlesse traine." Her birth from Satan's head reminds us that Errour too was a projection of the "little glooming light" of Redcrosse's virtue; and that Eve was the product of Adam's desire and of his own body. Sin is, then, a riddling, Sphinx-like figure of our divided nature, a 'sign' as Milton puts it, and one to be interpreted.

At the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, poet and reader respond with horror and loathing to figures of uncontrolled female desire, and in this they resemble Spenser's Knight of Holiness in the early stages of his quest. Like Adam, Redcrosse must fall to a fatal acceptance of his sexuality, flirt with Despair, and be educated to his mortal and redeemable identity. The first book of *The Faerie Queene* takes its hero from an initial misogyny to a readiness to accept and participate in a procreative readiness to be fruitful and multiply. Only after his strenuous recovery at the House of Holiness is Redcrosse ready to meet with Charissa and see her surrounded by her offspring, a redeemed vision of the horrific Errour with her misbegotten brood. Only then, after he has seen how the two are connected, can he go on to defeat the Dragon and win the maiden.

A similar education occurs in *Paradise Lost*. Most obviously, Adam himself falls (as Milton puts it) through an excessive or undiscriminating uxoriousness, despairs, and finally is atoned both with Eve and alongside her with the Deity. As matron, now, rather than concubine or mere help meet, Eve is revealed as a clarified figure of the female, purged of the misogyny found in the poem's earlier books. Indeed, as Michael sums up the message for her, the 'great good' that will come from her as a result of the Fall is "The great deliverance by her seed to come / (For by the woman's seed) on all mankind" (12.600-01). Michael's parenthetical (and

seemingly paradoxical) emphasis on "the woman's seed" here reminds us that mankind will be redeemed by a Man born of a virgin; phrased in this manner, it echoes and complements the mysterious genesis of earlier Creations and incarnations. The mystery of the Virgin Birth seems to impute a comparable power to Mary as Mother of God.

Both Milton's poem and Spenser's Legend of Holiness similarly educate narrator and reader as well as the protagonist, from initial misogynistic views of sexual difference which echo Protestant identification of the church of Rome with the Whore of Babylon, to a more nuanced Reformation of Christian values that emphasizes the wholeness of man's divided nature through the union of male and female. The ending of *Paradise Lost* carries the full weight of a romance conclusion that is also a beginning. Lovers are united, hand in hand, and their expulsion from Paradise is also a homesteading voyage eastward through an Eden of human possibilities. "The world was all before them, where to choose / Their place of rest, and providence their guide" (12.646-47). The place of rest is both that New World that these pilgrims can make their home in life, and the plot of earth to which their mortal bodies will return. Their "wandering steps and slow" represent an internalizing of Errour and Sin as the familiar process of rational progress.

As we examine the features of the poem that Milton has brought forth (brought forth, that is, in its canonical second edition), we can understand its genesis by observing its family resemblances. Like Virgil's epic and Spenser's projected moral anatomy, it is divided into twelve books, in the latter case completing a Spenserian tale left half-told; and as we have seen, it imitates in somewhat greater detail the pattern of sexual fall and regeneration seen in Spenser's twelve-canto Legend of Holiness, which can stand as a model for his unfinished larger work. Finally, we can see a significant trace, I think, of an earlier ancestor whom Spenser was attempting to overgo according to his friend Gabriel Harvey. We noted at the outset that Milton echoed Ariosto's promise of "Cosa non detta in prosa mai, né in rima." In pursuing "Things [the plural may be significant here] unattempted yet in prose or rhyme," Milton invites us to see how his poem both resembles *and* differs from Ariosto's. Like Ariosto, he gives

us a new kind of epic, his own answer to the chivalric romance, in which his hero is distracted from the path of virtue by his love of woman. But Ariosto's poem ends with a terrible irony: Orlando gets his senses back after Astolfo locates them on the moon, and he is able to get on with his life, no longer pursuing his impossible dream of winning Angelica's love. We know the rest of the tragic story from all those songs of Roland that have been told in prose and rhyme. By contrast, Milton affirms—as he had done elsewhere in his polemical writings—the possibility as well as the need for a fulfilling marriage. Adam does not learn to live without the faithless Eve, but falls with her just as he had earlier (we feel) fallen for her. This is indeed something that Ariosto had not attempted. Finally, we may recall that Ariosto's poem ends with a motto whose meaning and relevance critics continue to debate: *Pro bono malum*. This may be no more than the conventional lament of an underappreciated or underpaid poet who feels he has been treated badly; it may refer as well to the poem's radical denial of a romantic ending, since Orlando fails to get what readers would have wanted for him.[6] But although Milton does not allude directly to this motto, his positive ending, with its emphasis on what historians of ideas refer to as the paradox of the Fortunate Fall, suggests that he has reversed Ariosto's message to read *Pro malo bonum*, to call attention to the good that has come from the evil of the Fall, and specifically from the fruit—also *malum*[7]—of that forbidden tree. It is the birth of human nature as we know it—fallen but redeemable—that Milton has been pursuing; as he remarks so memorably in *Areopagitica*, "It was from out the rind of that one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the world." Here as in the poem, Milton is drawn to monstrous images to figure our origins; but it is out of this polymorphous chaos of impulses that the brooding poet has drawn order and presented us with a goodly child. The full mapping of this child's family resemblances remains an endless task, but an urgent one, for we cannot help wanting to locate our own fallen selves here.

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NOTES

[1]"Master W.H., R.I.P," *PMLA* 102 (1987): 42-54.

[2]See Jacqueline T. Miller, *Poetic License: Authority and Authorship in Medieval and Renaissance Contexts* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1986) esp. 30-33.

[3] *Paradise Lost*, ed. M. Y. Hughes (Indianapolis and New York: Odyssey, 1962), and *The Poems of John Milton*, eds. John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London and Harlow: Longman, 1968).

[4]Fowler 461.

[5]*The Dialectics of Creation: Patterns of Birth & Regeneration in 'Paradise Lost'* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1970).

[6]The motto accompanies an emblem showing bees being smoked out of their hive by a peasant who wants their honey. We may recall Milton's comparison of Pandaemonium to a similar "straw-built Citadel" (1.773), with its conflation of Virgil, *Georgics* 4.149-227, and the completion of St. Peter's in 1636 by the Barberini Pope Urban VIII whose arms similarly featured bees.

[7]Lewis and Short (*Latin Dictionary*, Oxford 1879) note a pun on the two words—identical except for a long first vowel in the word for apple and a short one in that for evil—in Plautus, *Amphitruo* 2.2.79, and also call attention to the proverb, *ab ovo usque ad mala*, from beginning to end, alluding to the Roman custom of beginning a meal with eggs and ending with apples—as we have done in this essay.