

## ABSTRACT

TOMS, MARCIA LYNN. "And Dreams Advise": The Dreams in *Paradise Lost* and Their Precursors. (Under the direction of Robert V. Young.)

While much has been written about Eve's dream in Book V of *Paradise Lost*, the other dreams are often ignored or considered only as foils for Eve's first dream. Adam's two divine dreams and Eve's postlapsarian dream, however, each serves important literary functions within the epic. Adam's first dream brings him into Paradise; his second shows his uxoriousness; Eve's final dream restores her relationships with God and Adam. Together, all four dreams illustrate the nature of human life before and after the fall.

Each of these dreams ultimately derives from classical and biblical uses of dreams, but Milton modifies the conventions of the literary tradition to fit his purpose. This study compares each of the four major dreams in *Paradise Lost* to dreams in works of Milton's immediate predecessors. Works of Spenser, Sidney, and Donne provide examples of traditional uses of dreams in literature and help illuminate the ways Milton modifies that tradition.

**"AND DREAMS ADVISE": THE DREAMS IN *PARADISE LOST*  
AND THEIR PRECURSORS**

by  
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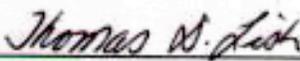
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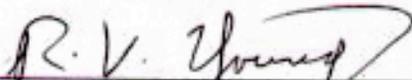
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Chair of Advisory Committee

**Dedication**

for my mother

## **Biography**

Marcia Lynn Toms grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina. She graduated as valedictorian from NC State University in May 2000 with a Bachelor of Arts in English. In the fall of 2001, she returned to NC State University to pursue a Master of Arts in English. She currently lives in Cary, NC.

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## Introduction

John Milton's use of dreams in *Paradise Lost* evolves from a long tradition of dreams in epics and other literature. From Jacob's ladder to Penelope's dream of an eagle killing twenty geese to the entire frame of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*, dreams play a large part in western literature. The dream offers authors an element that readers assume is significant because of its fantastical nature. Since the advent of Freud, readers often look to the inner desires of the dreamer, but when reading Milton this approach can be very dangerous. The dreams that Milton uses are based on conventions established long before him, and certainly much before Freud. While most scholars avoid using such an anachronistic theory when studying Milton, Freudian tendencies still occasionally creep into scholarly works. In part to avoid such a tendency, this work compares and contrasts the dreams in *Paradise Lost* to those of Milton's immediate predecessors. This approach not only avoids the intrusion of modern psychology, but also illuminates the literary functions these dreams serve. By considering each of the prelapsarian dreams individually as they relate to previous dreams in literature, and then comparing those to the remaining postlapsarian dreams, Milton's innovative uses of dreams become clear.

Dreams appear in many places in *Paradise Lost*: Milton refers to Jacob's dream as Satan approaches Earth (III.510), and Raphael advises Adam to "Dream not of other Worlds" (VIII.175). This study, however, focuses on the four dreams that Adam and Eve recount in *Paradise Lost*. On the first day of his life, Adam dreams twice: once of Eden and once of Eve. The next dream, chronologically, is Eve's dream of eating from the forbidden tree. Eve's dream of the "Promis'd Seed" is the final dream of the epic. These dreams all occur

during sleep, and all fit the traditional definition of dream: “A train of thoughts, images, or fancies passing through the mind during sleep; a vision during sleep” (O.E.D. 1.a). These dreams, then, are a subset of visions: “Something which is apparently seen otherwise than by ordinary sight” (O.E.D. 1.a). To consider every instance of extraordinary sight in *Paradise Lost* is beyond the scope of this study; instead, it considers the four dreams when Adam and Eve actually sleep.

Through this focused approach, this study attempts to push forward the current research on dreams in *Paradise Lost* by offering a more complete view of these four dreams as a whole. While much has been written about Eve’s dream in Book V, the other dreams are often ignored or considered only as foils for Eve’s first dream. This study considers each dream as it occurs chronologically in *Paradise Lost* and compares it with dreams in other literature, especially those found in Milton’s other texts and in sixteenth-century texts. Within the scope of this paper, it is impossible to consider every dream in the sixteenth century, but Sidney, Spenser, and Donne provide important examples of the ways dreams were used in literature before *Paradise Lost*. Through the adaptation of these conventions, Milton demonstrates the perfection of prelapsarian human life and the necessity of divine grace afterwards.

### Encountering Divine Presence: Adam's First Dream

Despite the overwhelming critical attention to Eve's first dream, the other dreams in *Paradise Lost* provide a framework for considering man's relationship to God. Adam's dream described in Book VIII, the first dream chronologically in Eden, is the preëminent dream in *Paradise Lost*. Not only does the dream comfort Adam, but it also transforms his life. After the dream, Adam is spiritually and physically in Paradise.

Adam's first dream follows the patterns of many dreams in epics. It is clearly what Manfred Weidhorn calls "objective": "While the subjective dream arises from the dreamer's own inner faculties, the objective is caused by some agency from without—whether the gods... or ghosts of the dead" (46). Most of the dreams in the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid* are objective: they are caused by Zeus, Juno, other gods, or at least ghosts (Weidhorn 60). In the Bible, dreams are a common means for God to communicate with men: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream" (Numbers 12.6). These divine, objective dreams often instruct or warn the dreamer.

In *The Faerie Queene*, Arthur's dream of the queen of fairies functions like many divine dreams in literature. Arthur explains his dream: "by my side a royall Mayd / Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay" (I.ix.13). As the lady leaves at the end of the dream, she tells him "Shee Queene of Faeries hight" (I.ix.14). This knowledge then inspires Arthur:

When I awoke, and found her place deuoyd,  
And nought but pressed gras, where she had lyen,  
I sorrowed all so much, as earst I ioyd,

And washed all her place with watry eyen.  
 From that day forth I lou'd that face diuine;  
 From that day forth I cast in carefull mind,  
 To seeke her out with labour, and long tyne,  
 And neuer vow to rest, till her I find,  
 Nine monethes I seeke in vaine yet ni'll that vow vnbind. (I.ix.15)

The dream creates such a strong connection between Arthur and the queen of the fairies that nothing can weaken his resolve. While this dream inspires Arthur, its most important function in the epic is to give motivation for Arthur's quest.

The divine dream serves much the same motivation in *The Aeneid*: "Mercury's arousing Aeneas to action provides the hero with a motivation for an abrupt departure from Dido that would have seemed cold and unchivalrous if undertaken on his own initiative" (Weidhorn 60). Divine dreams, although less forced, can function like a *deus ex machina*: they are a literary convention that can move the plot forward through divine intervention. While Adam's first dream has much in common with these traditional divine dreams, it is more than just a literary convention; it is an exemplar of what dreams should be. It does not just move the plot along, nor does it simply inform Adam; it transforms Adam.

When Adam describes being created, he admits that "For Man to tell how human Life began / Is hard; for who himself beginning knew?" (250-51). He compares coming into consciousness to waking "from soundest sleep" (253). "By quick instinctive motion" Adam moves around Earth and notices much, but that is not enough (259). Adam begins to wonder:

But who I was, or where, or from what cause,  
 Knew not; to speak I tri'd, and forthwith spake,

My Tongue obey'd and readily could name  
 Whate'er I saw. (270-73).

He asks the creatures around him:

Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?  
 Not of myself; by some great Maker then,  
 In goodness and in power preëminent;  
 Tell me, how may I know him, how adore,  
 From whom I have that thus I move and live,  
 And feel that I am happier than I know. (277-82)

Adam does not hear anything immediately, and “Pensive I sat me down; there gentle sleep / First found me” (287-88). Naturally, Adam thought he was about to return to his “former state / Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve” (290-91), but he is not afraid and soon falls asleep.

Comfort and assurance are the first effects in Adam’s oracular dream. As he sleeps, an “inward apparition gently mov’d / My fancy to believe I yet had being, / And liv’d” (293-95). As Kristin Pruitt McColgan says, “From its beginning, this dream, inspired by an actual presence, is one of creation, initiating confidence in Adam of his ‘being’” (136). The assurance that the dream provides begins the process of moving Adam closer to God.

The dream also instructs. A “shape Divine” (295) tells Adam that it was “called by thee” to be his guide (298). The guide tells Adam that he is “First Man, of Men innumerable ordain’d / First Father” (297-98) and then carries Adam “over Fields and Waters, as in Air / Smooth sliding without step” (301-02). Adam is literally exalted by this dream: he is assured

of a high purpose, and he is lifted high above all other creatures on Earth. When he arrives in Eden, Adam notices

A Circuit wide, enclos'd, with goodliest Trees  
 Planted, with Walks, and Bowers, that what I saw  
 Of Earth before scarce pleasant seem'd. Each Tree  
 Load'n with fairest Fruit, that hung to the Eye  
 Tempting stirr'd in me sudden appetite  
 To pluck and Eat; whereat I wak'd and found  
 Before mine Eyes all real. (304-10)

When critics do focus on dreams other than Eve's infernal dream, they seem to be stumped by the fact that after each dream Adam wakes to find "all real." John C. Ulreich claims "the assumption that readers naturally make here, I believe, is that Adam's dream merely reflects an external reality: Man awakens to find a place that had already existed independently of his dreaming-consciousness" (369). This "assumption" is incorrect, according to Ulreich, because in the Bible, the Garden was created after man was given life (Gen. 2.7-8). Despite the fact that Adam had been created for some hours before he encounters the garden, giving omnipotent God plenty of time to create Eden, Ulreich makes the following claim:

Adam's awakening into truth can be understood, not as a passive discovery,  
 but as an active process of imaginative creation. When Adam enacts his  
 (hitherto unconscious) desire, he brings Eden into being. (369-70)

While most postlapsarian dreams do not end with finding the dream true, that does not mean that Adam created Eden. This theory is contradicted by the text itself and overlooks the point of Adam's dream. First, Adam's dream is most definitely not a wish-fulfillment dream: it is

not until Adam is flown over Eden that the rest of Earth “scarce pleasant seem’d” (306). Ulreich tries to get around this by saying Adam enacts a “hitherto unconscious” desire, but Adam, only a man, certainly could not create what he could not even imagine. Second, the newly created Adam knows that he is subordinate to “some great Maker” (278) and wants to know how to worship Him. This humility is in strong contrast to Satan, who does not want to be below anyone, to admit that anyone created him. Satan denies Abdiel’s claim that even he was created by God:

who saw

When this creation was? remember’st 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, when fatal course  
 Had circl’d his full Orb, the birth mature  
 Of this our native Heav’n, Ethereal Sons. (V.856-63).

But Adam’s waking into consciousness not only shows that he is dependent on God to educate and create him, but, more significantly, he acknowledges his subservient status.

J. D. Hainsworth says that Adam’s waking to find he is actually in the Garden of Eden shows that “Milton here seems unconcerned about sustaining in his fiction a distinction between dream and actuality” (100). What Hainsworth sees as a problem actually shows the power of Adam’s dream: the dream and actuality are the same. That “fantastic” place, of which we, fallen creatures, can only dream, is not limited to the realm of fancy for prelapsarian man. The dream can be the truth. Lest we fall prey to Ulreich’s logic, we must

remember, though, that Adam's dream is only Adam's in the sense that it occurs in his mind; it is an objective dream, caused by God. It is God who has the power to make dreams truths. Adam's only part in creating the dream was asking the question: who created me? The dream, in addition to comforting and exalting Adam, is an intermediate answer to that question.

After his dream, a "Presence Divine"—not the "shape Divine" that appears in the dream—talks to Adam (314). The presence tells Adam that he is "Author of all this thou seest" and gives Adam the garden (317). The dream has prepared Adam for the answers to the question he asks. It also, as McColgan claims, "serves as a prologue to divine instruction" (137), for it is within this first encounter that God clearly warns Adam about the forbidden tree.

This dream certainly performs more than just moving action along as many divine dreams in previous literature do, for it functions, both literally and figuratively, to bring Adam to a new place: one where he can communicate with God. The dream assuages Adam's doubts, assures him of his place in the world, and places him within Paradise next to God's presence. This dream is simply the best that any human could ever have.

### **Awakening to Joy: Adam's Love-Dream**

Shortly after his first dream, Adam falls asleep again and, again, watches the “shape” during his sleep. But this dream is different; it does not carry Adam to a new place but, instead, creates his companion: Eve. With this dream, to illustrate the differences between pre- and post-lapsarian life, Milton draws on a traditional poetic convention: the love-dream.

The love-dream poem often consists of two important parts: an elaborate description of the beloved lady who comes to the sleeping lover in a dream and the lover's brutal awakening to reality without the lady. Adam's dream of Eve described in Book VIII of *Paradise Lost* clearly contains the first major element, but instead of vanishing at the end of the dream, Eve is there when Adam wakes. This transformation of the love-dream convention says much about Adam, God, and Eden. By comparing Adam's love-dream to those in earlier poems, such as those of Sidney and Donne, we can see which conventions Milton is choosing to use and which he alters.

For the most part, Sidney uses the love-dream in very traditional ways but emphasizes that the dream is created by the lover for wish-fulfillment; it is a subjective, not an objective, dream. In Sonnet 32 of *Astrophil and Stella*, Astrophil, the dreamer, spends the first 8 lines of the sonnet extolling the power of Morpheus. He is the “lively son of deadly sleep” (1); he is a prophet, historian, and poet (3-4). Despite the typical belief that waking life is guided by reason and sleep by fancy, Astrophil claims that, through the “so sure a power” of Morpheus, he is able to sleep without deceitful “closed-up sense” (6). He is, in fact, able to learn: “by thy [Morpheus's] work my Stella I descry, / teaching blind eyes both how to smile and weep” (7-8). But the sestet shows that Astrophil believes Morpheus is more powerful than he really

is. When Astrophil asks Morpheus how he was able to get such perfect elements to portray Stella, Morpheus responds, “Fool... no Indies such treasures hold, / But from thy heart, while my sire charmeth thee, / Sweet Stella’s image I do steal to me” (12-14). The image is within the dreamer. No matter how much Astrophil would like to believe that his dream is a prophetic vision of what will come true, it is only what Macrobius calls a “nightmare,” a dream in which the dreamer experiences “vexations similar to those that disturb him during the day” (88). Macrobius even uses “the lover who dreams of possessing his sweetheart or of losing her” as an example of this type of dream (88).

Even though the image of the beloved is within the lover, Morpheus is not unnecessary in *Astrophil and Stella*. Morpheus helps the dreamer see the vision within himself. Even though Morpheus “steals” the image, Astrophil is willing to make that sacrifice if it allows him to dream of Stella. In Sonnet 39, Astrophil says, “I will good tribute pay” if sleep will come; he offers “smooth pillows, sweetest bed, / A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light, / A rosy garland, and a weary head” (8-11). If those things will not induce sleep, then Astrophil offers this last temptation: “thou shalt in me/ Livelier than elsewhere, Stella’s image see” (13-14). Astrophil claims that Stella’s image is actually better, “Livelier,” within him than in reality. This sentiment is again expressed in Sonnet 38: Stella’s image is “wrought / By Love’s own self, but with so curious draught, / That she, methinks, not only shines but sings” (6-8). Sidney emphasizes through these statements that the vision of the woman in love-dreams is a Petrarchan ideal. No woman exists who could fulfill all the expectations of these love-dreams. The woman in the dream is a construction of the dreamer, not a reflection of some reality. Milton shows the perfection of Eve and Eden by altering both of these conventions in the prelapsarian dream. Eve *is* as perfect as the

image in Adam's dream; the dream of Eve *does* precede the reality of her existence. Such is the nature of prelapsarian human life.

For Astrophil, however, the dream remains the only place for wish fulfillment. When the dreamer awakes, the beloved is gone, "Leaving me nought but wailing eloquence" (Sonnet 38.11). Astrophil can do nothing but long for sleep again. It is this typical ending of a love-dream that Donne revised in his love-dream poems.

Two poems by Donne, one in the *Songs and Sonets* and another an elegy, are both named "The Dreame," and both subvert the typical love-dream found in poetry.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, Elegy X should not be called "The Dreame" at all; the speaker addresses the "Image" impressed in his "faithfull heart" as coins are stamped with their king's image (1-2). While it is certainly a vision, it is not a dream. The title "The Dreame" first appeared in the 1635 edition of *Poems* (Bowers 280).

Elegy X begins by calling attention to the Petrarchan ideal of the image. The first line, "Image of her whom I love, more than she," emphasizes the nature of women in poetic visions: they are but fantasies—unreal and much easier to love than their tangible counterparts. But this image imparts value to his heart, as a king's image on a coin gives it value. Since the image is so great, however, the speaker's heart "is growne too great and good for me" (6). So the speaker then tells the image to "goe, and take my heart from hence" (5). It is important to note that the heart, as C. S. Lewis points out in *The Discarded Image*, has not always been an organ associated with emotions only; as Lewis notes, "The Hebrew word [for 'heart'] would be more nearly translated 'Mind'" (160). According to Pliny the Elder, the heart is "the dwelling-place of the mind" (XI.182). Thus, the speaker of Elegy X

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<sup>1</sup> Since "The Dreame" within the elegies has another title, I will refer to it as Elegy X. From this point on "The Dreame" refers to "The Dreame" in *Songs and Sonets* only.

says, “When you are gone, and Reason gone with you, /Then Fantasie is Queene and Soule, and all” (9-10). The image, contained within the heart, is part of the rational mind, and the speaker wishes for that rational mind to leave. Without reason, the speaker will be left with only sleep and fantasy.

The speaker claims he would rather have a fantasy or dream because “if I dreame I have you, I have you, / For, all our joyes are but fantasticall / And so I scape the paine, for paine is true” (13-15). Why would he want reason, which causes pain, instead of fantasy, which offers joy? Even when awake, when Reason is the guide, our joys are no more real than dreams, according to the speaker.

The speaker knows that dreams are fleeting, and he nods to the traditional love-dreams in poetry:

After a such fruition I shall wake  
 And, but the waking, nothing shall repent;  
 And shall to love more thankfull Sonnets make,  
 Then if more honour, teares, and paines were spent. (17-20)

The narrator, if he stopped now, might write poems much like Sidney’s: hating the waking, but loving the dream. He, however, does not stop; instead, he begs:

But dearest heart, and dearer image stay;  
 Alas, true joyes at best are dreame enough;  
 Though you stay here you passe too fast away:  
 For even at first lifes Taper is a snuffe.  
 Fill’d with her love, may I be rather grown  
 Mad with much heart, then ideott with none. (21-26)

Weidhorn suggests that in these lines the narrator rejects the joys found in sleep and asks the lady to stay. Weidhorn claims:

Notwithstanding that both experiences are equally transitory, he [the narrator] would rather be “mad with much heart”—maddened by emotional pain during the actual presence of the unrequiting Lady—than be “ideot with none”, bereft of “Reason” in slumber. (97)

However, the “heart” is not the beloved; the beloved, in fact, never appears in this poem at all, never has any “actual presence.” Instead, the heart continues to be the narrator’s heart that contains the image of the woman, as in line two. The narrator will not become an “ideott” with no reason, but instead “mad.” While “mad” often suggests a lack of reason today, it could also mean “Fervent with poetic or divine inspiration” (O.E.D. a. 8). Instead of yielding to sleep “which locks up sense, [and] doth lock out all” (16), the narrator chooses to feel, to experience the love and anguish caused by this image. For if “true joys at best are dreame enough,” then what are joys in fantasies? Better to feel something real than to delude oneself with something false. This choice is a strong reversal of Astrophil who, as we have seen, will “good tribute pay” just for a dream of Stella. Elegy X, then, is not a “Dreame” or a love-dream poem; instead, it is a strong reaction against the tradition.

The narrator of Donne’s other poem entitled “The Dreame” also twists the conventions present in previous love-dreams. The poem begins not with a dream, but with waking. And waking does not cause regret, but joy. Unlike the other love-dreams presented heretofore, the narrator awakes from a dream about a woman and actually finds her present. The narrator explains to the lady that “for nothing lesse then thee / Would I have broke this happy dreame” (1-2). The narrator continues and makes a statement directly opposite to one

made by the narrator of Elegy X. In the middle of Elegy X, the narrator claims that Fantasy could “present joyes meaner... / Convenient, and more proportionall” than the real woman can (11-12); the narrator of “The Dreame” argues the exact opposite. He says the dream “was a theme / For reason, much too strong for phantasie” (3-4). As all lovers know, fantasy cannot satisfy every desire.

As the poem progresses, it becomes clear that the narrator is asking the woman to help him satisfy those desires that fantasy cannot. He attempts seduction when he compares her to his dream. He says, “My Dreame thou broke’st not, but continued’st it, / Thou art so truth, that thoughts of thee suffice, / To make dreames truths; and fables histories” (6-8). Since love-dreams typically portray an impossibly perfect woman, this is a strong compliment. This statement again argues the opposite of Donne’s other love-dream. Instead of claiming that all joys are fantasies, the narrator of “The Dreame” claims that the woman can make fantasy real. The narrator continues this “logic” when he asks her to help him make the rest of his dream real: “Enter these armes, for since thou thoughtst it best/ Not to dreame all my dreame, let’s act the rest”(9-10). In this poem, unlike all others we have seen, the dream is the prelude to a possible reality, not an escape from the reality of unrequited love. Of course, all these statements must be taken with a grain of salt: the dreamer obviously has an agenda.

While trying to meet his goal, the narrator of “The Dreame” crosses a dangerous line. He says:

I thought thee  
 (For thou lovest truth) ... an Angell, at first sight,  
 But when I saw thou sawest my heart,

And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an Angels art,  
 When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st  
 Excesse of joy would wake me, and cam'st then,  
 I must confesse, it could not chuse but bee  
 Prophane, to think thee any thing but thee. (13-20)

The narrator is imparting exceptional power to the woman: she can see inside his thoughts. He admits that he places her higher than others; he even says that he was wrong when he thought her a mere angel. The irony of the statement is, as R. V. Young says, "to say that it is 'prophane' to think a woman less than herself, when less means angelic, is in fact profane because the assertion implies that a mortal creature is divine" (264).

When the woman rises to leave without "completing the dream" with the narrator, he seems to fall back on the joy that a dream can give. He reprimands the woman for raising his hopes, and other things, only to leave without satisfying them: "Thou cam'st to kindle, goest to come; Then I / Will dreame that hope again, but else would die" (29-30). This last phrase could be read as the narrator consoling himself, but, if we recall a phrase from Elegy X, "So, if I dreame I have you, I have you," it actually makes the lady's mixture of "Feare, Shame, [and] Honor" inconsequential. The narrator taunts the lady with the fact that he will still be able to dream of her. And since "thoughts of thee suffice / To make dreames truths" (7-8), anything he dreams will be true. This ending is not a return to the illusory comfort that dreams give the dreamer, but a last-ditch effort to make the woman surrender. Donne has completely reversed the love-dream lyric: it is not a comfort for the lover, but a ploy to seduce the beloved.

Milton himself wrote a traditional love-dream poem in Sonnet XXIII, “Methought I saw.” The first 12 lines of the poem show the vision the lover has of the lady. Unlike many love dream poems, the narrator does not emphasize the lady’s perfect physical beauty; instead, the narrator emphasizes the lady’s perfected spiritual state. The dreamer can see “Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint” (8). Although “Her face was veil’d,” the narrator can see that “Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin’d” (10-11). Although Milton emphasizes her purity and not her beauty, she is still that ideal figure that love-dreams portray.

The last two lines make a quintessential ending to the love-dream lyric: “But O, as to embrace me she inclin’d, / I wak’d, she fled, and day brought back my night” (13-14). Like many love-dreams, it ends when the boundary between fantasy and reality becomes threatened, when the vision is about to make physical contact. Milton enhances the contrast by altering the rhythm of the two lines. Line 13 extends that moment of anticipation, only to be quelled by the abrupt awakening, described with short, staccato sentences. As in most love-dreams, the woman is gone and the man left with nothing but a memory. This poem also shows that Milton knew and employed the conventional love-dream in his poetry. Thus, Milton’s modifications to Adam’s second dream in Eden take on special meaning.

Adam’s dream of Eve is the only dream in *Paradise Lost* that has any precedent in the biblical account: “the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Gen. 2.21-22). Milton, of course, adds much to the biblical account of Adam’s dream, as he does to the entire creation story. In *Paradise Lost* Adam does more than fall into a deep sleep: he

*dreams*, and this dream reveals much about Adam's relationship to Eve and the nature of prelapsarian life.

Like his first dream, a "divine shape" shows Adam a new creation. Adam knows that in most dreams reason is not present, and he states that when he fell asleep, the divine presence "op'n left the Cell / Of Fancy my internal sight" (460-61). Fancy, as Adam explains to Eve in Book V, is not as high as Reason, but higher than "mimic Fancy" that works when we sleep (100-113).

In his dream, Adam sees the creation of Eve. The divine shape "op'n'd my left side, and took / From thence a Rib... The Rib he form'd and fashion'd with his hands" (465-69). In a literal way, God creates the image of Eve from Adam, as Morpheus finds "ivory, rubies, pearl and gold, / To show [Stella's] skin, lips, teeth and head" within Astrophil in Sonnet 32 (10-11). Astrophil, however, already has a complete image of Stella within him, for he says "thou shalt in me, / Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see" (13-14). In *Paradise Lost*, however, the image of Eve is not formed inside Adam's mind. He provides the raw materials for Eve, but it is God who actually creates the image.

When Adam sees the image take shape, he is immediately enamored of her. His statements sound like the lovers in previous love dreams:

So lovely fair,  
 That what seem'd fair in all the World, seem'd now  
 Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd  
 And in her looks, which from that time infus'd  
 Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,  
 And into all things from her Air inspir'd

The spirit of love and amorous delight. (471-77)

Adam sees perfection in this new-made creature. But this is dangerous ground for Adam. He attributes too much power to Eve, solely based on looks. Claiming that she inspires the spirit of love makes her power dangerously close to God—the one who inspired, literally “breathed into,” Adam. He is like Astrophil who, in Sonnet 5, worships Cupid, which is just “An image ... which for ourselves we carve / And, fools, adore in temple of our heart / ‘Til that good god make church and churchman starve” (6-8). Adam, like Astrophil, replaces the worship of God with the image of his desire. He comes close to making the same kind of profane statement that the narrator of Donne’s “The Dreame” makes.

Adam shows this profanity even more when the dream takes a quintessential love-dream poem turn: the lady leaves. After seeing her with such rapture, Adam says, “Shee disappear’d, and left me dark, I wak’d / To find her, or for ever to deplore / Her loss, and other pleasures all abjure” (478-80). Adam, like other dreamers, fears to wake lest the woman will be gone. But Adam’s statement shows more than just fear; it shows how he again is attributing too much power to Eve. When she leaves, Adam says she “left me dark.” God, the creator of the Universe, is the one who literally “lights” Adam’s world. Only God can leave Adam in the dark. Likewise, Adam says that, if he wakes and does not find Eve, he will give up all pleasures. Hopelessness denies God, but Adam admits that he has lost hope. In the next line, he says, “When out of hope, behold her, not far off” (481). It is easy to pass over the introductory clause because of the dramatic turn of events that follows, but we must not get too hasty. Adam admits to being out of hope because of this woman. From the first moment of seeing Eve, Adam shows the signs of his weakness for Eve. Immediately

after the account of this dream, Adam says that he delights in “Taste, Sight, Smell, Herbs, Fruits, and Flow’rs” (527), but with Eve

passion first I felt,  
 Commotion strange, in all enjoyments else  
 Superior and unmov’d, here only weak  
 Against the charm of Beauty’s powerful glance. (530-33)

Adam shows the same tendency as the narrator of Donne’s *Elegy X*: to love the image more than the woman. Though Adam knows that Eve is “th’ inferior, in the mind / And inward Faculties” (541-42), when he looks at her “what she wills to do or say, / Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best” (549-50). Her beauty has too much power over him, and he loses himself in her image. But Adam does not need Eve’s image; he needs Eve. When Adam asks for a mate, God “knew it not good for Man to be alone” (445). God agrees with Adam that he needs “conversation with his like to help, / Or solace his defect” (417-18). The key is conversation, not vision. Adam’s reaction to his dream of Eve shows his misguided uxoriousness. It shows more than just a tendency to love his wife too much; Adam loves her *image* too much.

Like Donne’s reversal in “The Dreame,” Adam’s discovery of Eve at the end of his dream is a twist on a love-dream lyric. Unlike Donne, however, who uses the reversal to show an attempted seduction, Milton’s alteration of the typical love-dream shows the perfection of Eden. Adam dreams of a woman, enjoys the dream, and then wakes up to find it a reality. Adam’s dream and waking show that in Eden the joys are real, not “fantasticall” as the narrator of Donne’s *Elegy X* claims; dreams are not simply tools to “scape the paine,

for pain is true.” Instead, dreams are a way for Adam to come to a new joy, and that joy is true. For Milton, who dreams of a lost wife, what better way to show the perfection of Eden?

### **Tempting Through Dreams: Eve's Infernal Dream**

Not all dreams in Eden are as pleasing as Adam's first two divine dreams. Satan, as well as God, can influence human dreams. While Eve sleeps, Satan causes her to dream of eating the forbidden fruit. This dream is the most critically studied dream in *Paradise Lost*. Debates surrounding it most often focus on such questions as how much of the content of the dream was created by Satan? by Eve? what was the effect of the dream? did it taint Eve? was she already tainted? As with Adam's love-dream, Eve's infernal dream is based on literary conventions that answer some of these questions.

Early Christians commonly believed that Satan and other demonic spirits could influence humans through dreams. Aquinas argues that man is extremely susceptible to the devil's operations while asleep because, quoting Aristotle, "when an animal sleeps, the blood descends in abundance to the sensitive principle." Satan can "darken man's reason so that it may consent to sin, which darkness is due to the imagination and sensitive appetite. Consequently the operation of the devil seems to be confined to the imagination and sensitive appetite" (ST I-II.lxxx.2). Satan is not likely to succeed if he acts directly on man's intellect, so it makes sense that he would use dreams, when our "sensitive principle" is in abundance, to encourage man to sin.

The seventeen-year-old Milton made use of the infernal dream in his propagandist piece "In Quintum Novembris." While King James is dutifully ruling his kingdom, Satan sees England's "blessings of wealth and festal peace" (31). This success irks Satan, but England's worship of the "sacred deity of the true God" bothers him even more (33-34). Satan then goes to Rome where he visits the Pope in a dream "covered with a false shape" that resembles St. Francis of Assisi (79). In the Pope's dream, Satan compliments the Pope

and encourages him to act; he tells the Pope: “While a savage nation born under the northern sky mocks your throne and your triple crown and while the archer-English insult your rights, O venerable one. Up and Act!” (94-97). If the Pope does not act, Satan warns him, there will be horrors in the future. Of course, Satan tells the Pope that he must not act openly, but rather use fraud. Conveniently, Satan offers details for how to thwart the English: “You have it in your power to scatter their dismembered bodies through the air, to burn them to cinders, by exploding nitrous powder under the halls where they will assemble” (119-21).

Unfortunately for Satan, God protects His people, and all is well for James and the English. While this is not the most elegant use of an infernal dream, it clearly shows that Milton was familiar with its use in classical literature. This infernal dream closely resembles Turnus’s dream caused by Alecto in Book VII of *The Aeneid*: the Fury comes disguised as an old priestess to Turnus in his sleep and incites him to war (VII.413-61).

A more famous example of an infernal dream closer to Milton’s time is the Red Cross Knight’s dream of Una in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*. While the Red Cross Knight sleeps, Archimago uses a spirit as a messenger to Morpheus to request “A fit false dreame, that can delude the sleepers sent” (I.i.43). The “diuerse dreame” will divert or distract the dreamer, in this case, from Una, the one truth; thus, it does the exact opposite of Arthur’s dream of the queen of the fairies. While the first spirit obtains the dream, Archimago turns another spirit into a lady “with charmes and hidden arts” resembling Una (I.i.45).

Before the false dream comes to the Red Cross Knight, “he slept soundly void of euill thought” (I.i.46). But the false dream makes him imagine

loues and lustfull play,

That nigh his manly hart did melt away,

Bathed in wanton blis and wicked joy:  
 Then seemed him his Lady by him lay,  
 And to him playnd, how that false winged boy  
 Her chast hart had subdewd, to learne Dame pleasures toy. (I.i.47)

However, the Red Cross Knight is troubled by this dream, and

In this great passion of vnwonted lust,  
 Or wonted feare of doing ought amis,  
 He started vp, as seeming to mistrust  
 Some secret ill, or hidden foe of his:  
 Lo there before his face his Lady is,  
 Vnder blake stole hyding her bayted hooke. (I.i.49)

The Red Cross Knight, like Adam, awakes and finds the woman in his dream present, but it is not a relief for him. He does not wish, or expect, to find an unchaste Una beside him.

When he does, he almost attacks her, but “hasty heat tempring with sufferance wise, / He stayed his hand, and gan himself aduise / To proue his sense, and tempt her feigned truth” (i.50). Even after waking to find her there offering to kiss him, the Red Cross Knight still has doubts. He listens to the false Una’s declaration of love, but he is still the “redoubted knight” (i.53). He sends her on her way and lies “musing at her mood” (i.55).

Archimago learns from the two spirits that the ploy was not effective; so he fashions the first spirit in the shape of a “young Squire, in loues and lusty-hed” (ii.3). Archimago wakes the Red Cross Knight and shows him “Where that false couple were full closely ment / In wanton lust and lewd embracement” (ii.5). It is only at this moment, when his “eye of reason was with rage yblent” (ii.5), that the Red Cross Knight flees the hermitage.

It is important to note that the false dream itself is not enough to separate the Red Cross Knight from the truth; at the moment he wakes, he does not believe the dream to be real. He only comes to believe that Una is unchaste after seeing a vision of her in a dream, in his bed, and in bed with another man. The necessary combination of dreaming vision and waking vision will be critical when we turn to Eve's first dream in *Paradise Lost*.

The Red Cross Knight eventually lets his jealousy overwhelm his reason even though he resists the trickery of Archimago at first. Kerby Neill argues that the Red Cross Knight should not be excused for succumbing to this trickery. Neill points out that "the lustful dream about Una... is foreign to his chaste habits of thought," and, therefore, the Red Cross Knight should have suspected witchcraft (175). The argument is not that interesting considering that the Red Cross Knight does wake himself from his dream "seeming to mistrust / Some secrete ill, or hidden foe of his" (i.49). Although Neill's argument is basically that the Red Cross Knight should have suspected more fervently, it does bring up an important point: despite the trickery, the Red Cross Knight is still responsible for his loss of faith in Una. Just as Satan can only incline a person to sin, Archimago's trickery cannot force the Red Cross Knight to abandon Una.

Richard Levin does not think that the lustful dream should be such a shock to the Red Cross Knight, nor does he think the Red Cross Knight has "chaste habits of thought" as Neill does. Levin notes that the Red Cross Knight is described with sexual language from the beginning of the epic. Words like "pricking" and images like the unruly horse make Levin claim "Redcrosse just manages to hold his sexual urges in check" (4). Thus, the dream and visions Archimago creates are effective because of the Red Cross Knight's own weaknesses. The sexual dream is exactly what the Red Cross Knight most wants and what he most fears.

Thus, Levin says, “Overwhelmed by his own emotions and the world’s duplicity, he is an object of pity, but he is headed for grave trouble” (10).

Whether the Red Cross Knight lusts before his dream or is not wise enough to see the deceit behind it, both Neill and Levin believe that he is culpable for the actions he takes. Similar arguments have been made about Eve and her infernal dream. Critics blame Adam and Eve for not taking heed of the warning that her dream provides. Critics also claim that Eve was culpable for the events that occurred in her dream because she had weaknesses that Satan could exploit. Others claim Eve was tainted by the dream. By looking closely at the language of the dream and the rest of *Paradise Lost*, however, it is clear that Eve is not culpable for the dream and continues to have free choice despite it.

In Book V, once Eve wakes from her “unquiet rest,” she relates the events of her dream (11). Eve tells Adam that she heard a “gentle voice, I thought it thine” (37) speaking to her:

Why sleep'st thou Eve? Now is the pleasant time,  
 The cool, the silent, save where silence yields  
 To the night-warbling Bird, that now awake  
 Tunes sweetest his love-labor'd song; now reigns  
 Full Orb'd the Moon, and with more pleasing light  
 Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain,  
 If none regard; Heav'n wakes with all his eyes,  
 Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire,  
 In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment  
 Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze. (38-47)

As John Reichert notes, this speech echoes many events of the previous day: when night came, Eve asked Adam, “But wherefore all night long shine these, for whom / This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?” (IV.657-58), the very question with which Satan begins his “serenade” to Eve. Even night is described in the dream with similar language; in Book IV, the narrator describes dusk as follows:

Now came still Ev'ning on, and Twilight gray  
 Had in her sober Livery all things clad;  
 Silence accompanied, for Beast and Bird,  
 They to thir grassy Couch, these to thir Nests  
 Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;  
 She all night long her amorous descant sung;  
 Silence was pleas'd: now glow'd the Firmament  
 With living Sapphires: Hesperus that led the  
 The starry Host, rode brightest, till the Moon  
 Rising in clouded Majesty, at length  
 Apparent Queen unveil'd her peerless light,  
 And o'er the dark her Silver Mantle threw. (IV.598-609)

As Reichert notes, both passages describe the silent night, only interrupted by the nightingale's “amorous” or “love-laboured song.”

Reichert also notices some differences: “the first [night, in Book IV,]... presents a changing scene, catching the gradual coming on of evening star.... The second passage [in Eve's dream], on the other hand, is static, catching a frozen moment.” Another important change is the perspective: “the stars in the first passage are there to be seen, ‘living

sapphires' in the distance; in the second they are there to see, to gaze down on Eve's beauty" (122). This is no doubt a nod to Eve's major weakness—vanity—that Satan has likely heard from Eve's description of her waking and seeing herself: "A Shape within the wat'ry gleam appear'd... There I had fixt / Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire" (IV.461-66). The similarities between the two nights are so strong that even Adam notices them; after hearing Eve's account of the dream, he says, "Some such resemblances methinks I find / Of our last Ev'ning's talk, in this thy dream, / But with addition strange" (V.114-16). All of these similarities show that Satan knows Eve's wants and weaknesses because he has been lurking in Eden, listening for opportunities.

According to Eve's account of her dream, after she hears what she believes to be Adam's call:

To find thee I directed then my walk;  
 And on, methought, alone I pass'd through ways  
 That brought me on a sudden to the Tree  
 Of interdicted Knowledge. (V.49-52)

Kristin Pruitt McColgan claims

Satan's strategy of allowing Eve to make her own way to the Tree of Knowledge creates the illusion of free will and simultaneously achieves his purpose: only if Adam is absent from the dream sequence can Satan appropriate his position and recommend self-exaltation as superior to relationship. (138)

When Eve sees the tree, it is "Much fairer to my Fancy than by day" (V. 53). A shape "like one of those from Heav'n / By us oft seen" stands beside it (54-55). Satan disguises

himself as an angel for Eve, just as Archimago disguises the evil spirit as Una in *The Faerie Queene* or as Satan disguises himself as St. Francis for the Pope in “In Quintum Novembris.” Coming as a friendly creature simply makes good sense, but the choice of an angel is especially clever since Adam told Eve the reason the stars and moon shine when all humans and animals sleep is that

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. (IV.677-680)

This disguise is yet another example of how Satan has to “borrow from what he has heard and observed in Paradise” (McColgan 136).

The angel asks why no one is allowed to eat from this tree: “is Knowledge so despis’d? / Or envy, or what reserve forbids to taste?” (V.60-61). And then, to Eve’s shock, “He pluckt, he tasted” (65). Eve knows the “angel’s” actions are wrong and “mee damp horror chill’d / At such bold words voucht with a deed so bold” (65-66). But, as they will be in the real temptation, Satan’s arguments are persuasive. He says the fruit is “able to make Gods of Men” (70); he also tells her “happy though thou art, / Happier thou may’st be, worthier canst not be” (75-76). If she eats the fruit, then she will be “not to Earth confin’d” (78). When he holds the fruit before her “the pleasant savory small / So quick’n’d appetite, that I, methought, / Could not but taste” (84-86). After Eve eats she seems to fly, but suddenly, Eve says, “My Guide was gone, and I, methought, sunk down, / And fell asleep; but O how glad I wak’d / To find this but a dream!” (91-93).

Even though the arguments that the angel in Eve's dream makes are the same ones that Satan makes during the actual temptation in Book IX, and even though Eve eats from the forbidden tree in both cases, it does not mean that the dream necessitates the act. Just as the Red Cross Knight distrusts his dream, so does Eve note that her dream is filled with "offense and trouble" (V.34). She does not approve of the dream, and that disapproval comforts Adam.

After hearing Eve's account of her dream, Adam "answer'd sad" (V.94): "This uncouth dream, of evil sprung I fear / Yet evil whence? In thee can harbor none, / Created pure" (98-100). Adam seems to know that the "addition strange" must come from outside Eve (116), but he does not worry much because

Evil into the mind of God or Man  
 May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave  
 No spot or blame behind: Which gives me hope  
 That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream  
 Waking thou never wilt consent to do. (117-21)

Eve's "startl'd eye"(26) and statements about her fear of the dream show that she does not approve of this dream.

Many critics, however, do not believe Adam's explanation, or that Eve disapproves of the dream. One of the first critics to deny Adam's theory, E. M.W. Tillyard, claims,

In the abstract the doctrine [that evil will not taint unless accepted] may be tenable, but it cannot work in concrete literary presentation. No human being can conceive or represent evil entering a mind quite alien to it. Dramatically, the mere fact of entrance implies some pre-existing sympathy. (11)

Tillyard also believes that since Eve wakes with “Tresses discompos’d, and glowing cheek” (V.10), the dream has clearly affected Eve, and “she has really passed from a state of innocence to one of sin” (12). Thus, according to Tillyard, Eve has already fallen at this point.

Millicent Bell expands Tillyard’s claims; she believes that Adam and Eve were always “fallen” within *Paradise Lost*. She, like Tillyard, believes “the mind cannot accept the fact that perfection was capable of corruption without denying the absoluteness of perfection” (863). Since it is not possible for a “perfect” being to fall, Milton could only “characterize the state of fallen Man—Man as he knew him” (864-65). Bell uses Eve’s dream as just one example of how Eve is already a fallen, fallible creature. Bell misreads the dream, however. She claims that the dream shows that Eve is fallen because Eve is so responsive to “the Tempter’s choice flattery” even though she “may at this point be only a few hours old” (871). Eve, however, cannot be a few hours old; she has experience of previous days and nights. When she wakes she tells Adam that this dream was different: I “dream’d, not as I oft am wont, of thee, / Works of day past, or morrow’s next design” (V.32-33). Eve’s dreams before Satan’s interferences were, like the Red Cross Knight’s, “void of euill thought.”

The most crucial misreading, however, that both Tillyard and Bell make is their conception of prelapsarian Adam and Eve; they conflate fallible with fallen. Their claims are based on the belief that perfect humans won’t fall because they can’t; they would be perfectly contented and nothing could induce them to disobey. This theory is both implausible and unsubstantiated. First, if this belief is true, then their argument is not with Milton and *Paradise Lost*, but with the creation story itself. What could induce Adam and Eve in

Genesis to fall if they were perfect? Second, neither Milton nor any characters in *Paradise Lost* believe that Adam and Eve were “perfect” before the fall.

Consider Milton’s words in *De doctrina Christiana*:

We may understand from other passages of Scripture, that when God infused the breath of life into man, what man thereby received was not a portion of God’s essence, or a participation of the divine nature, but that measure of the divine virtue or influence, which was commensurate to the capabilities of the recipient. (979)

The capabilities of man are clearly lower than God’s. In Chapter X, Milton says that the Tree of Knowledge was forbidden because “It was necessary that something should be forbidden or commanded as a test of fidelity” (993). If Man were perfect in the way that Tillyard and Bell believe, there would be no need of a test, for Adam and Eve could not fail.

Within *Paradise Lost*, it is also clear that Adam and Eve were always fallible. God says “I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (III.98-99). Adam and Eve always have choice. Even Adam knows he is not perfect, as the case he makes to God for his need of a companion shows:

Thou in thyself art perfect, and in thee  
Is no deficiency found; not so is Man,  
But in degree, the cause of his desire  
By conversation with his like to help,  
Or solace his defect. (VIII.415-19)

Tillyard’s and Bell’s arguments rely on a definition of prelapsarian perfection that is simply implausible. Adam and Eve were, from the moment of their creation, able to fall.

A more interesting debate about Eve's dream concerns the source. In book IV, Satan is found shaped as a toad,

close at the ear of Eve;  
 Assaying by his Devilish art to reach  
 The Organs of her Fancy, and with them forge  
 Illusions as he list, Phantasms and Dreams,  
 Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint  
 Th' animal spirits that from pure blood arise  
 Like gentle breaths from Rivers pure, thence raise  
 At least distemp'r'd, discontented thoughts,  
 Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires  
 Blown up with high conceits ingend'ring pride. (801-09)

Since both forging illusions with Eve's "Organs of her Fancy" and tainting "Th' animal spirits" use things already present in Eve to raise "discontented thoughts," it is easy to see why many critics believe Eve is tainted. According to Weidhorn, "Plutarch explains that, just as a well-trained beast behaves well when freed, a properly disciplined soul acts nobly in sleep" (20). William B. Hunter agrees:

the devil once having achieved a hold upon a man, that man is doomed: with  
 the organ of fantasy affected by his operations upon the blood, the  
 understanding, whose knowledge comes from the senses through the fantasy  
 is also darkened. (53)

But Adam's explanation that evil only taints when it is approved is not unique to him. His statement not only echoes Milton's *Areopagitica*—"To the pure, all things are pure"; not

only meats and drinks, but all kind of knowledge whether of good or evil; the knowledge cannot defile” (727)—but also the Bible: “Unto the pure all things are pure” (Tit. 1.15). Even though St. Thomas Aquinas says man is susceptible to Satan during sleep, it does not mean that Satan always succeeds: Satan “can change the inferior powers of man, in a certain degree: by which powers, though the will cannot be forced, it can nevertheless be inclined” (ST I.cxiv.2.3). Dreams can only incline; they do not force.

The text of *Paradise Lost* supports Eve’s innocence. Even Bell notes that Eve is described as innocent up to the moment she eats from the forbidden tree. After the dream, when Eve comes to join Adam and Raphael, the narrator says, “no veil / Shee needed, Virtue-proof, no thought infirm / Alter’d her cheek” (V.383-85). Even just before her fall, while she is talking to the Serpent, the narrator describes Eve as “yet sinless” (IX.659).

A prime example of a dream not tainting is in Book II of *Paradise Regained*. While wandering in the desert, Christ admits, “now I feel I hunger” before he falls asleep (252). He dreams “as appetite is wont to dream, / Of meats and drinks” (263-64). However, “Fasting he went to sleep, and fasting wak’d” (II.284). Eating in the dream did not destroy his fast, nor does it necessitate that he succumb to temptation. Although Satan creates for him “A Table richly spread, in regal mode, / With dishes pil’d, and meats of noblest sort / And savor,” Christ refuses (340-42). Despite his hunger, despite the temptation, Christ still has a choice about whether or not to eat. Of course, Christ is pure of heart, and we are not, but the scene shows that a sequence of desire, dream, and temptation does not force a person to do wrong. Eve, like the Red Cross Knight and Christ, continues to have choice despite her dream.

So why does Milton create this temptation dream? There is no scriptural precedent, unlike Adam's dream of Eve. Some critics suggest that Milton creates the dream to modify the Calvinist tradition of two temptations and two warnings (Weidhorn 139), but that Milton included the pairing as a nod to Calvinism seems weak. Infernal dreams are found in epics like *The Faerie Queene* and *The Aeneid*, but Milton does not use the dream to motivate Eve and move the plot forward. Despite many arguments that the dream causes Eve to sin, the dream actually has little lasting effect on Eve or Adam. After their brief discussion, "all was clear'd, and to the Field they haste" (V.136). As Richard Turner notes, "only the readers of *Paradise Lost*... recognize the suggestive context" of the dream (362). Turner claims the dream acts like a "rehearsal" of the temptation because it "raises the same expectations and the same tensions as the temptation, but the audience is granted a reprieve from the consequences of the actual Fall" (372). The readers, however, do receive this reprieve because they are not able to dismiss the dream as readily as Adam and Eve. The ominous foreshadowing in the dream focuses the reader's attention on Eve's vanity and pride, but since she fails to learn from it, the dream actually heightens the reader's anxieties. It becomes yet another warning that Adam and Eve fail to heed.

Perhaps the best explanation focuses not on Eve, but on the creator of the dream: Satan. McColgan claims that Eve's dream "is not an indication of what Eve is but rather of what Satan has become; it does not reflect Eve's anxiety, resentment, or wish-fulfillment but the fallen angel's, who creates a scenario in which exaltation and disobedience are characteristically joined" (142). The dream, then, is Satan's wish-fulfillment, not Eve's.

If we focus on Eve, we are likely to get bogged down in semantics. Within the story, it is clear that Eve was not tainted by the dream and that Satan was its cause. Eve's dream

reinforces what Tillyard and Bell fail to recognize: prelapsarian dreams can be influenced by either God or Satan. Ultimately, Adam and Eve must choose whether to follow God, whose dreams provide comfort and joy, or Satan, whose dreams bring nothing but “offense and trouble” (V.34).

### Understanding Through Dreams: Postlapsarian Dreams

Scholars rightly ask why Milton has God work through dreams since He can work through whatever means he chooses; he is not limited to the “imagination and sensitive appetite” like Satan. Both Adam and Eve converse with God even when they are not asleep, so why does He also act through sleep? William B. Hunter articulates the question:

Since the fancy was universally believed to exist upon a plane lower than that of reason, it may appear strange that Milton could present God as acting upon any level save the highest in man. For God could presumably make the revelation to reason itself. (26)

Hunter adduces the twelfth century Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, for a discussion of the degrees of prophecy. According to Maimonides, the highest degree obtainable through dreams is that “in the *dream of prophecy* the prophet sees, as it were, that He [God]... addresses him” (401). In lower degrees, the prophet sees an angel or a man, or simply hears a voice, but not God himself. Adam’s dreams where he sees a “shape divine” are clearly of this highest degree (VIII.295). However, Adam’s dreams are only the seventh degree according to Maimonides; the higher degrees always occur in a waking vision, not a dream. The highest form of prophecy is like that of Moses, “without action on the part of the imaginative faculty” (403). So why does Milton have God speak to Adam and Eve through this imaginative faculty?

C. S. Lewis reminds us that, before Coleridge reversed the two, between *Intellectus* (understanding) and *Ratio* (reason), “*Intellectus* is the higher” (157). *Intellectus* is “that in man which approximates most nearly to angelic *intelligentia*; it is in fact *obumbrata*

*intelligentia*, clouded intelligence, or a shadow of intelligence” (157). Angels simply know, while men have to reason. As Adam says, Angels are “pure / Intelligence of Heav’n” (VIII.180-81). Raphael explains to Adam that both angels and men have reason, but it may be “Discursive, or Intuitive; discourse / Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours” (V.488-89). Men have to move from one point to another to gain understanding; angels just know.

This distinction between men’s and angels’ ways of knowing is not new. Aquinas also distinguishes the two and says, “Reasoning, therefore, is compared to understanding, as movement is to rest, or acquisition to possession; of which one belongs to the perfect, the other to the imperfect” (I.79.8). It is this imperfection that makes Aquinas say, “immaterial substances [such as angels] cannot be known by human investigation” (I.88.1). We cannot “reason” our way to an understanding of them. That inability then forces the following conclusion: “Since the human intellect in the present state of life cannot understand even immaterial created substances [angels], much less can it understand the essence of the uncreated substance [God]”(I.88.3). As Milton says, there are things “invisible to mortal sight” (III.55).

In answer to Hunter’s question, God does not always reveal Himself to reason because reason is just as incapable of understanding God as fancy is. When one is dreaming and reason is asleep, it is quite possible that man’s mind is more open, less resistant to the incomprehensible. Raphael notes that it is a “Sad task and hard, for how shall I relate / To human sense th’ invisible exploits / Of warring Spirits” (V.564-66). His solution is the following:

what surmounts the reach

Of human sense, I shall delineate so,

By lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms,  
As may express them best. (V. 571-74)

He creates a vision—an intermediate image—that is more comprehensible to the human mind. God uses dreams in much the same way; they are more comprehensible to the human mind. Adam's dreams help him understand the reality to which he is about to wake. Dreams are even more important to postlapsarian man, for they both comfort and instruct humans once we are separated from Eden.

Milton's earlier poem, *Elegy III*, shows a predilection for using dreams as instructive and comforting. After the death of the Bishop of Winchester, the speaker "was grief-stricken" (1) and tormented by visions of the plague. When he falls asleep, he dreams of beautiful place, and "suddenly Winchester's bishop stood before me and a starry light shone in his glorious face" (53-54). The bishop says from "serene lips: 'Come, my son, and joyously enter into the delights of your father's kingdom; and rest here from your labors forever'" (62-64). Heaven looks so pleasing to the speaker that when he wakes, he weeps "for the slumber that was disturbed by the Dawn. May dreams like these often befall me!" (67-68). The dream in *Elegy III* comforts the reader and offers him some divine knowledge: the nature of heaven.

The dreams in *Paradise Lost* are not limited to the characters within it; the epic itself is treated as a dream. J. D. Hainsworth finds this "[m]ost strange" (102), but we should not find it strange. Milton uses divine dreams as a method for communicating with God, and it should be no shock that in his invocations to Urania he often compares *Paradise Lost* to a dream. Milton is careful to distinguish Urania from traditional, non-Christian muses. The statement "The meaning, not the Name I call" (VII.5) shows that Milton wanted to place his

Muse within a Christian, not a pagan, context. He emphasizes this difference by contrasting his muse with Calliope, who cannot save her son because “shee [was but] an empty dream”; Urania, however, is “Heavn’ly” (VII.39). The muse who “Visit’st my slumbers Nightly” (VII.29) offers not just any dream, but a *divine* dream.

Milton claims that “Nightly I visit” the haunts of the Muses (III.32). He may be blind and can only “see” darkness, but

So much the rather thou Celestial Light  
Shine inward, and the mind through all her power  
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence  
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell  
Of things invisible to mortal sight. (III.51-55)

Through the muse’s dreams, the poet is able to see, and understand, more. The poet knows this divine knowledge is crucial for the success of this poem. His critics may find fault in this poem because he may be

An age too late, or cold  
Climate, or Years damp my intended wing  
Deprest; and much they may, if all be mine,  
Not hers who brings it nightly to my Ear. (IX.44-47)

It is only through the divine dream that Milton is able to articulate what is so far above him. The dreams given by the muse bring him closer to the truth, a function that the final dream in *Paradise Lost* also serves.

We do not know the contents of the final dream in *Paradise Lost*, but we do know that it comforts and instructs Eve. After showing Adam the fate of humans after leaving the Garden of Eden, Michael tells Adam to

go, waken *Eve*;

Her also I with gentle Dreams have calm'd

Portending good, and all her spirits compos'd

To meek submission. (XII.594-97)

Michael also tells Adam that when the time is right, “Let her with thee partake what thou hast heard” (598); but when Eve approaches, she says “with words not sad”:

Whence thou return'st, and whither went'st, I know;

For God is also in sleep, and Dreams advise,

Which he hath sent propitious, some great good

Presaging, since with sorrow and heart's distress

Wearied I fell asleep. (610-14)

Eve does not need Adam to tell what he has learned, for she knows that “By mee the Promis'd Seed shall all restore” (623). According to McColgan, “That Eve learns about the ‘Promis'd Seed’ directly from God, rather than through report from Adam as Michael had suggested, indicates how important it was to Milton for Eve to possess this knowledge before she leaves Paradise” (144). This knowledge comforts Eve and also restores her faith in her relationships with both Adam and God.

This dream clearly contrasts with Eve's previous dream; as she says “*God* is also in sleep,” not just Satan. The dream shows the readers, and Eve, that she is not just susceptible to evil influences. She, like Adam, can receive divine dreams. McColgan notes that “Satan's

dream led Eve away from Adam; this [second dream] leads her to acknowledge the healing power of relationship” (143). After her dream, Eve has no more hesitation; she says, “lead on; / In mee is no delay; with thee to go, / Is to stay here” (614-16). Thus, her two most important relationships, with God and Adam, are restored.

Since Eve’s report is the final spoken words in the epic, the hope and faith it shows resonate. The effect is to leave the reader with a final positive view of Eve, pointing to that kind of knowledge that cannot come through reason. Since Eve’s path to understanding is so different from Adam’s path, many critics have suggested Milton was making a statement about the different ways that the opposite sexes understand. Sometimes the comments are neutral, such as Catherine Cox’s claim that Eve’s understanding

has come through a dream rather than through discursive narrative. Eve’s dream, implying a passive and intuitive way to truth and grace, complements Adam’s more active, intellectual experience on the mountain. Thus the events of Books XI and XII, by distinguishing the virtues or ways of knowing particular to each sex, rejoin the male and female figures for the providential dance. (185-87)

At other times, the critics become more judgmental; Joan Malory Webber:

Although both attend to lectures, Eve is more responsive to dreams [than Adam]: the work of reeducating her after the Fall thus is much less laborious than that of teaching Adam, who has to have everything explained to him.

(16)

Milton, however, never suggests that these two ways of understanding Providence are related to sex. Eve’s final dream is like Adam’s first: a divine dream sent to assure and instruct the

dreamer. Understanding through dreams is not something that is relegated to females. Moreover, Adam's vision of the future comes after "all his Spirits became intransit" (XI.420). He is in a dream-like state for much of Books XI and XII.

Ultimately, dreams can still offer instruction and comfort to postlapsarian humans. They are, in fact, even more important. For after the fall, humans need even more guidance than ever. That both Adam and Eve in their final visions are comforted and inspired shows, as McColgan says, that "discovery and restoration, not loss, are the substance of visions inspired by God" (137). Through what Macrobius calls the "modest veil of allegory" that dreams provide (85), humans are still able to understand what is beyond us.

## Conclusion

Whether caused by gods, demons, or desires, all the dreams in literature before *Paradise Lost* describe postlapsarian life. While the dreams in *Paradise Lost* are related to these previous dreams, Milton does not simply adopt conventions; he adapts them. Milton's alteration of the conventions not only shows the nature of Paradise, but also prepares us for the most important dreams of all: those after the fall. While Eve's first dream shows the power of Satan to attack our weakest points and Adam's divine dreams show the inexhaustible goodness of God, the final dreams and visions of Adam and Eve portend the ultimate triumph over Satan. They also show that despite their banishment from Eden, God is still present and humans still have access to divine knowledge. Ultimately, in narrative rather than chronological order, the dreams in *Paradise Lost* move us from infernal temptation to divine grace.

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