

MILTON IMPREGNATED: FEMINIZING CHAOS IN *PARADISE LOST*

by

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Abstract:

In the first invocation of *Paradise Lost*, God is depicted as impregnating Chaos with the seed of a world, suggesting an intricate connection between the creation of the cosmos and reproduction. Yet, despite the acknowledgement of many critics such as Neil Forsyth that “one of the most original ideas in *Paradise Lost* is Chaos” (77), there seems to be little scholarship that closely explores the relationship between Chaos, impregnation, and creation. If God is impregnating the abyss, the abyss must be feminized in some way. This thesis considers the ways Milton feminizes Chaos as a space and argues that *Paradise Lost* presents a complicated and often inconsistent attempt to appropriate the language of reproduction and the female body in order to gender Chaos and the multiverse. Focusing on the female womb, and the culturally generated traits such as leakiness and double-formedness associated with the female body, Milton depicts a deterritorialized, grotesque cosmos where the boundaries and distinctions between Heavenly and Hellish spaces and bodies are muddled and intertwined. Inside this grotesque multiverse, Chaos becomes a kind of feminine Goddess who gives birth to the universes alongside God and the various cosmic spaces and bodies take on a more mutable nature unbounded by the strict laws of the body.

Yet Milton also seems to affirm some hierarchies between masculinity and femininity that are prevalent during his time by suggesting that the masculine aspects of his cosmos (i.e. God) are sometimes more significant than their feminine counterparts (i.e. Chaos). Furthermore, the epic also seems to accept some of the cultural characteristics that demonize the female body by presenting it as monstrous, feeble, and incorrigible in addition to acknowledging its subversive, generative and transformative nature. In the end, by delving into the seemingly inconsistent, conflicting ways in which the cosmic spaces of *Paradise Lost* are gendered as well

as examining Milton's complicated treatment of gendered bodies, this project illustrates that the very evidence of inconsistency and contradiction is the epic's way to assert the spatially mutable and gender-fluid nature of the cosmos.

Lay Summary:

This thesis argues that John Milton's *Paradise Lost* uses the language of human reproduction and the female body to transform the boundless universe, or multiverse, into gendered spaces and bodies. Focusing on the female womb, and the culturally generated traits of the female body such as leakiness and double-formedness, Milton creates a fluid multiverse where the supposedly rigid boundaries and distinctions between Heavenly and Hellish spaces and bodies are muddled and intertwined. Inside this multiverse, Chaos becomes a kind of feminine Goddess who gives birth to the universes alongside God and the various cosmic spaces and bodies become more mutable, freer, and more capable of transformation. In creating this unbounded multiverse, Milton's epic ultimately serves to bring the cosmos into the realm of human creation.

Preface:

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Shian (Tim) Yu.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Lay Summary	v
Preface	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Dedication	ix
Milton Impregnated: Feminizing Chaos in <i>Paradise Lost</i>	1
Creation and Maternal Inspiration in Milton's Womb of Chaos	6
Double-formed Spaces: The Mutable Bodies of Sin, Chaos, and Hell	26
Grotesque Spaces: Milton's Incontinent Paradise	42
Milton's Grotesque Cosmos	47
Conclusion: A Deterritorialized Multiverse?	58
Bibliography	61

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Special thanks are owed to my parents, and my lovely partner Saxon, who have supported me throughout my years, and pushed me to work hard but also enjoy my down time.

Dedication

To my parents, and to Saxon

Milton Impregnated: Feminizing Chaos in *Paradise Lost*

The main piece of new vocabulary I will introduce to describe Milton's canvas of creation is "Multiverse." Although technically anachronistic, the term is highly useful for a discussion of Milton's cosmology, given that the synonyms "Universe" and "Cosmos" bespeak, respectively, unity and order and that, therefore, neither term can properly be employed to denote Milton's Chaos, which is boundless and disordered.

Dennis Danielson, *Paradise Lost and the Cosmological Revolution*, xvi.

One of the most fascinating aspects of *Paradise Lost* is the existence of the multiverse, a version of the cosmos where different universes such as Heaven, Hell, and Earth, are continually conceived and born. At the core of this multiverse, as Danielson suggests, Milton highlights not only God, but Chaos also. In the first invocation, God is depicted as impregnating Chaos with the seed of a world, suggesting that creation is a combined effort of the two entities. Yet, despite the acknowledgement of many critics such as Neil Forsyth that "one of the most original ideas in *Paradise Lost* is Chaos" (77), there seems to be little scholarship that closely delves into Chaos's generative capabilities. More specifically, criticism rarely explores the relationship between Chaos, impregnation, and creation. Surely, if God is impregnating the abyss, the abyss must be feminized in some way. Thus, there seems to be a visible gap in Milton scholarship. What is the significance for Milton to include and extensively describe both God, the creator, and Chaos, the site for God's creation? More importantly, why does Milton feminize the site of creation? The ways Milton feminizes Chaos as a space holds many implications for our understanding of the epic. Milton uses various characteristics, both biological and non-biological, of the female body such as the womb, the bosom, leakiness, and double-formedness to establish Chaos as a feminine

space. In doing so, Milton portrays Chaos as a female cosmos so as to create a “beside¹” entity to his masculine God. Thus, Milton is able to imagine two figures as existing “from the first” (1, 19), allowing him to depict cosmic creation as the combined effort of both a male and a female entity. Moreover, using the feminine space of Chaos, Milton is also able to explore the concepts of fluidity and mutability.

This dual feminine/masculine Chaos/Creator dynamic complicates the discussion surrounding Milton and masculinity. In discussing the way Milton feminizes Chaos, this project will seek to nuance claims made by writers such as Virginia Woolf that Milton was “the first of the masculinists.” In this sense, despite demonstrating, as Nyquist would argue, an “apologetic tendency” (124) towards Milton, this project joins the ranks of critics such as Neil Forsyth and Diana McColley in providing a kind of complication of Milton’s treatment of femininity in the epic. For instance, despite claims made by scholars such as Elizabeth Sauer that Milton feminizes Hell and Chaos so that he can damn them and focus his “sparagmatic tendency” (Lieb) upon them, Milton’s feminizing of Chaos seems to serve a more complicated purpose than that. However, this is not to say that I wish to present Milton as a staunch feminist along the lines of critics such as Joan M. Webber. Like Milton’s attitude towards his blindness, his treatment of femininity is equally ambiguous.

Secondly, as scholars such as William Empson, Michael Bryson, and Peter C. Herman have argued, Milton’s theodicy is more “sincere” (Rumrich, 1) and represents more of a struggle and risk in reaching for new understandings of divinity than what the majority of current critics

¹ I use the term “beside” in the way that Sedgwick suggests. She argues that as opposed to trying to move beyond, or attempting to counter perspectives. It is better to argue for and establish “besides” so that there is more harmonious interaction rather than conflict.

who emphasize Milton's orthodoxy suggest. John Rogers, in an enlightening article on Milton's theological politics, states that

The dominant critical tendency among scholars of Milton has been to avoid the notorious conclusions of Empson's interpretation: critics of the last forty-five years have tended rather to argue for the sheer incommensurability between earthly and heavenly sovereignty (68).

In the sections where I work out the similarities between Milton's depiction of Chaos and of God, I seek to mirror Empson's idea that Milton is perhaps searching beyond the "Aonian Mount" for a new model of divinity. Ultimately, I still hope to show that Milton's text is written with the goal of theodicy in mind. However, I will illustrate through a discussion of Chaos, that his project is incomplete because the epic itself is perhaps less about Milton's defence of God than it is about his struggles to make sense of the cosmos that Milton created.

The thesis will be divided into three sections. In the first section, titled "Creation and Maternal Inspiration in Milton's Womb of Chaos," I delve into the ways in which Milton uses images of the female womb and the concept of a dark and uncultivated Chaos to imbue creation with a maternal characteristic that seems to elevate female generative power as well as affirm a kind of masculine hierarchy, creating a kind of tension between masculine and feminine generative powers in his cosmos. Engaging heavily with the theoretical discussions of Milton's womb present in the works of Neil Forsyth and John Rumrich, I first attempt to illustrate the ways in which Milton uses various female bodily images (the womb, the rib) to transform Chaos into a maternal entity. Rumrich's discussion of maternal inspiration will draw attention to the parallels Milton makes between receiving divine inspiration, depicted as a kind of impregnation

of his dark and empty mind by divine light, and the first moment of cosmic creation where God impregnates the “vast abyss” to demonstrate how divine inspiration, which is so central to Milton’s poetry, is received by Milton’s imagined feminine receptacle, his mind. Milton’s constructed mind-womb also speaks to the gender-fluidity that is discussed in works by critics such as Michael Lieb as it becomes a source for poetic creation and a feminizing of masculine bodies in the epic.

In the second section titled “Double-formed Spaces: The Mutable Bodies of Sin, Chaos, and Hell” I explore the concept of the “double-formed” body, something used to describe perhaps the only female character residing in the abyss, Sin. Although Milton is similar to some of his English predecessors such as Spenser and Shakespeare in using the double-formed body to suggest feminine monstrosity and corruption, Milton also applies double-formedness to feminize Chaos and grant it a kind of spatial fluidity and mutability. The idea of the female as “double-form’d” is what allows Milton to portray Chaos as a space of neutrality and transitivity, where the boundaries between bodies and spaces become fluid. Additionally, a consideration of the double-formedness of Hell from non-gendered, imperialistic perspectives also demonstrate this same kind of transitivity. Double-formedness, depicted by Milton as a characteristic of a female body, gives way for Milton to imbue his cosmic spaces with mutability. For Milton, these double-formed bodies and spaces, both monstrous and mutable, both gendered and not, endow Milton’s multiverse with a fluid, unbounded quality characterized not by structure but by distortion, suggesting that the spatial boundaries in the cosmos are easily transgressed and blurred.

In the third and final section, “Grotesque Spaces: Milton’s Incontinent Paradise,” I explore Milton’s use of the concept of the “leaky body,” a common trait constructed for the

female body, especially in early modern English stage plays, to understand the boundlessness and transcendental nature of divinity. I begin with a discussion, aided by the works of Gail Kern Paster and Peter Stallybrass, of how the idea of the “leaky body” is used during Milton’s time mostly as a way to generate comedic effects and, as a result, ridicule the female body. Then, engaging with Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the grotesque body and the way in which Milton attaches the idea of the “leaky body” to Chaos, I will demonstrate that Milton complicates his attitude towards the leaky body by aligning the concept of leakiness, or the inability to control boundaries, with the idea of rebirth. Finally, a comparison between Milton’s characterization of Heaven to that of Hell and Chaos demonstrates how the idea of leakiness becomes a way for the epic to create an immanent cosmos where the spaces of the multiverse all exist in the same material realm.

Ultimately, this project will seek to demonstrate that Milton’s vast multiverse is a gendered cosmos, and that the cosmic dance is also a dance between these gendered energies and spaces that both co-exist and conflict with one another. Although Milton seems to affirm many stereotypical ideas of masculine dominance in this gendered discussion of cosmology, the multiverse is also the site in which the subversive nature of the cultural traits of femininity is explored, making the multiverse, and thus the epic itself, a complicated and gender-fluid space.

Creation and Maternal Inspiration in Milton's Womb of Chaos

Milton was not the first to utilize the language of reproduction to depict aspects of creation. In fact, some of his predecessors, such as Shakespeare, make extensive use of images of pregnancy to discuss forms of poetic creation. However, Milton is nevertheless able to discuss the relationship between human reproduction and creation from a relatively rare perspective. Due to his intimate knowledge of and close engagement with the cosmological debates of his time, Milton is able to take the language of human reproduction and apply it to his portrayal of the creation of the cosmos. More importantly, by transforming Chaos into a feminine space through the use of womb imagery, he is able to establish a feminine entity alongside his masculine God, before time and space ever existed, so that the two entities may conceive the universe in the same way a man and woman conceive children. In *Paradise Lost*, the universe has both a Mother and a Father from the very beginning, an idea that is rarely mirrored in the literature preceding him, and certainly not depicted in the same fashion. Milton's use of the metaphor of the womb allows him to describe Chaos as a feminine, generative space, and the dichotomy of Chaos/God opens the path for Milton to feminize the male body, suggesting the similarities between Milton's male characters and the hermaphrodite characters in both Plato's *Symposium* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. At the same time, however, Milton seems to also use this dichotomy between Chaos and God to elevate the importance of masculine generative powers as well, suggesting that his impulses to acknowledge both the generative powers of Chaos and God places the feminine and masculine creative forces in conflict with each other inside his multiverse.

The metaphor of reproduction is used to understand and describe creation and creativity before and during Milton's time. Historically and even today, the language of reproduction, conception, and the womb are commonly used to make sense of and to describe the process of

mental creativity. As Elizabeth Sacks argues, the link between “literal and figurative pregnancy” (1) are so tightly intertwined that there is almost a “view of them as identical” (1). More significantly, the language that is used almost always refer to the female aspects of reproduction. Sacks gives us plenty of examples to demonstrate this fact. She argues that

Our commonest idioms reveal the extraordinary pervasiveness of this metaphor. We refer to an *abortive* idea, the *birth* of a project [...]. A *brainchild* is the natural *issue* of a *fertile* mind, sometimes *delivered*, with great *labour*, after a *pregnant* pause. An unrealised idea may be said to be in *gestation*. As we shape our experiences anew, our minds *conceive*. (1, emphasis author).

The words italicized by Sacks are predominately in reference to what a woman does in reproduction. It is the woman who delivers, who goes through labour, who is pregnant, and it is the woman who chooses to abort and the woman who is usually described as fertile. The English language relates the process of creativity to that of female biological reproduction.

What is even more fascinating about Sacks’ analysis is that many authors during the English Renaissance were, for the most part, also extremely sensitive to the gendered implications that this metaphor brought to their creative processes and frequently acknowledged the generative power of the female body. For instance, in 1599, Samuel Daniel in *Musophilus* describes the significance of mother in giving birth to a speaker’s oratory prowess:

Poesie (mother of this force)
That breeds, brings forth, and nourishes by this might,
Teaching it in a loose, yet measured course
With comely motions how to go upright:

And fostering it with bountifull discourse (2, 969 – 74).

Not only does Daniel declare that Poetry “breeds” a speaker’s eloquence, illustrating the importance of motherhood and femininity in inspiring creativity, he further feminizes poetry, seen by him as the source of oratory eloquence, by using language that evokes a sense of nurturing. He states that eloquence is nourished by poetry, that poetry teaches it “with comely motions,” and that it is fostered with “bountifull discourse.” Daniel not only gives us an image of mother poetry “bringing forth” her child of eloquence, but informs his readers of the ways in which the mother raises her child, slowing watching its development and guiding it along the way with a “measured course” until it reaches its maturity. Creativity and intelligence are intricately entwined with motherhood as demonstrated by the way Daniel elevates the significance of motherhood and maternal influence on his creative process.

Furthermore, some of the authors during this time were also acutely aware of how the “superior generative powers” (Sacks, 5) of women challenge masculine dominance. For instance, *The Byrth of Mankynde, otherwise named The Womans Booke* written in 1560 by Thomas Raynalde acknowledges this feminine reproductive authority. Raynalde says that woman

Truly is the receptacle, and as ye woulde say, the campe or field
of mankynde to be engendred therein. [...] yf a man woulde
demaunde to whom the chyld oweth most his generation, ye may
worthily make aunswere that, to the mother (C2v – C3r).

During Milton’s time, there are already much literature that both acknowledges and elevates female authority and maternal influence upon creativity. As an avid reader, Milton would have likely encountered, or at the very least, have been influenced by thinking in a similar vein such as this.

Yet, at the same time, society in early modern England also tends to dismiss female generative power by using these same metaphors to transform the female womb into a lifeless site for masculine impregnation and creation. In addition to notions of the womb as a source of sin as well as the womb as a site for female irrationality, otherwise known as the absurd concept of the “wandering womb” (Thompson, 20), which all date back to before the early modern period, Mary E. Fissell in her book *Vernacular Bodies* argues that the introduction of Protestantism and the rethinking of pregnancy and childbirth that it brought, over the next century, to the cultural imagination of Early Modern England also resulted in the womb being constructed and interpreted as “a kind of container in which God works the wonders of fetal development” and “a source of women’s maladies, through which the witches could work their evils” (Bullough, 283). The womb during Milton’s time, whether interpreted in the positive or negative light (i.e. as a site for God’s wonders or as site for witches’ evils), is seen as a kind of non-agentic organ. In other words, the womb’s generative power is treated in many ways as totally dependent upon an external force, be it that of a witch or God. Consequently, despite the seemingly equalist, almost feminist, attitudes of writers such as Raynalde in acknowledging the female reproductive force, it seems that Early Modern English culture is also strongly influenced by the culturally generated sense of hierarchy between the container and the shaper, and it is with these specific historical contexts in mind that *Paradise Lost* should be read and engaged with.

Like many of the writers mentioned, Milton elevates female generative significance by making extensive use of metaphors of female reproduction in his discussion of creation. Moreover, Milton expands the metaphor to include the process of cosmic creation and aligns God’s generative power with that of the phallus which allows Chaos to take on the powers of the

womb. For example, Satan hints at the existence of two creative forces in the multiverse near the end of Book 1:

Space may produce new worlds; whereof so rife
There went a fame in Heav'n that he ere long
Intended to create, and therein plant
A generation (650 – 54).

What is striking about this passage is that Milton has Satan establish two separate subjects that can create worlds as opposed to just one. The first creator is of course God, referred to as “he” in the passage. The second is that of Chaos, referred to as “space.” Satan’s speech acknowledges that both Chaos and God plays a role in cosmic creation. Whereas God “intends to create”, space, or Chaos, is what actually “produces” it. Moreover, the metaphor of planting also allows Milton to assign a very specific role for God. Satan says that God will “*plant / A generation*” (my emphasis). Milton’s God takes on the role of the planter, the one who sows seeds.

According to the *OED*, to plant a seed has historically meant to “impregnate a womb.” Thus, this passage also demonstrates the implicit way in which Milton brings in metaphors of human reproduction. God is not just a planter, he is a father that also performs the specific role of the father in creation. In fact, the word “seed” carries the meaning of “semen”, which once again suggests that God’s generative force is very much restricted to the biological generative powers of the father. Another passage in Book 7 further illustrates the phallic nature of God’s reproductive energy. In the scenes of Genesis, Milton’s God declares: “boundless the deep, because I am who fill / Infinitude” (7, 168 - 9). By paying attention to the idea of “filling,” we are reminded a second time of the phallic nature of God’s creative powers and his limitations. He cannot be empty like the deep because he plays the role of the filler. Therefore, he also cannot be

boundless in the same way that “the deep,” meaning Chaos, is boundless. These passages demonstrate to an extent how Milton uses metaphors of human reproduction to describe cosmic creation and assigns the reproductive role of the phallus, or the father, to God.

If God is the planter and sower, Chaos becomes the site upon which God can plant and grow his generations. Satan’s passage already alludes to this idea in claiming that “space produces new worlds”. Milton’s transformation of Chaos into the mother of the universe can be further demonstrated by the various images of wombs in the epic as well as the scene of impregnation in Milton’s first invocation. In the very beginning of the epic, Milton invokes the Heavenly Muse and declares:

Instruct me, for thou know’st; thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like sat’st brooding on the vast abyss
And mad’st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine (I, 19 – 23).

Here, stepping out from the veil of planting metaphors, Milton overtly uses the language of human reproduction to establish the mother/father relationship between God and Chaos. He demonstrates that God, depicted as the Dove, hovers over Chaos, or the vast abyss, and impregnates it with the known universe. Moreover, by attaching the idea of illumination to this moment of cosmic creation. Milton also provides another concrete metaphor by connecting this moment of cosmic impregnation with the idea of illumination, or that of light illuminating the darkness. In effect, as Milton establishes Chaos as a mother figure of the universe, he also begins to align the womb of Chaos to darkness and the phallic power of God to light.

The idea of Chaos as mother is exemplified by the womb imagery that Milton uses to describe it. In the first two books alone, there are four instances, including the one cited above, where Milton both directly and indirectly uses the image of the womb to describe Chaos. For example, near the beginning of Book 2, the demon Belial asserts that he does not wish to be “swallowed up and lost/ In the wide womb of uncreated Night, / Devoid of sense and motion” (149 - 151). Furthermore, in Book 1, Milton describes a hill in Hell, saying that “in his womb was hid metallic ore” (673). Additionally, near the end of Book 2, as Satan stands on the threshold of Hell and stares into the abyss, preparing for his leap, Milton once again shows us, through Satan’s eyes, that “this wild abyss” is “The womb of Nature and perhaps her grave,” (910 – 911). All three images of the womb are accompanied by an allusion to conception and pregnancy. In the first instance, Belial presents to us an image of himself “swallowed up” inside the womb of Chaos, immediately recalling the idea of a fetus inside a womb. It seems, in a way, that Belial transforms himself into a fetus that Chaos carries through language. Turning to the second womb image, Milton once again presents an image of conception. By showing that the womb of a hill in Hell, which is a space in Chaos, hides minerals, he turns the hill in Hell into a pregnant belly. Only this time, he uses “metallic ore” as opposed to Belial as the symbolic fetus that resides within the mother womb of Chaos.

These first two images also depict the Chaos womb as containing vast creative possibilities and potential, which is the source of Chaos’s generative power. Danielson makes this connection as he claims that “given the role of Chaos in offering *raw materials* from which a Cosmos may be created, the other main cluster of imagery relates to gestation, pregnancy, and birth” (47, my emphasis). After noting that the Hill of Hell holds “metallic ore”, for instance, Milton says that

Mammon, the last erected Spirit that fell
From Heav'n [...] soon had his crew
Opened into the hill a spacious wound
And digged out ribs of gold (679 – 90).

Pandemonium, the place where the demons hold counsel, is also made of gold, suggesting that Pandemonium is in fact built from the gold that Mammon has dug out of the Hill. Then, considering Belial's speech that the Chaos is the "womb of uncreated night," a connection between the womb of Hell and the Chaos womb reveals itself in that both seem to contain the raw material that is required for creation. Comparing the Hill containing the metallic ore to make Pandemonium and the idea of the womb as the "uncreated night," Milton shows that there is some form of existence in Chaos. They exist as the uncreated and unmolded essence of the multiverse. The female womb's power lies, therefore, in its ability to hold vast creative potential. Milton demonstrates that the womb possesses incredible generative force due to the fact that it is the site where all creative and generative potential is contained. This is where Milton creates his dichotomy of creative power between God and Chaos: whereas God is the shaper and the planter of seeds, Chaos is the space that holds the potential for growth and the site where the possibility for creation can be realized. Because Milton assigns strict roles to both God and Chaos in the process of cosmic creation, he suggests that both sides must be present in order to make the universe, for raw material needs a shaper, and the shaper cannot be without materials to shape. The feminine Chaos, in other words, becomes something that is as indispensable to creation as God is.

Finally, Milton also uses the image of the womb to demonstrate the eternal and almost sublime nature of the womb of Chaos. By portraying Chaos as both the birthplace of Nature "and

perhaps her grave,” Milton suggests the timeless nature of Chaos as a womb as not only is Nature conceived inside Chaos, it will also disappear well before Chaos and return back to the womb from which it came. Milton reminds us that Chaos is not only a mother, but an eternal mother. Much like God, the almighty father, the third womb image Milton presents demonstrates that Chaos is also an eternal figure and will outlive the children that she bears.

Moreover, the entire passage surrounding this womb image shows how Milton’s epic sees the Chaos womb as exceptionally awe-inspiring. As Satan looks into the abyss, Milton offers these lines:

Into this wild Abyss the warie fiend
Stood on the brink of Hell and look’d a while,
Pondering his Voyage (2, 910 – 19).

Comparing this description to Satan’s reaction to Eve in the middle of Book 9, it is striking how similar Satan’s reaction is to both Chaos and Eve. As Satan looks upon the mother of mankind, a female character of God’s creation, Milton offers these lines:

That space the Evil One abstracted stood
From his own evil, and for the time remained
Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed,
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge (63 – 66).

Firstly, the two passages further exemplify Milton’s elevation of the powers of the female body. Forsyth, for example, argues that the experience of Satan seeing the vastness of Chaos for the first time is marked by an “anxious hesitation” (79) in response to the vastness of Chaos from Milton’s use of the words “warie” and “a while”. This revelation demonstrates that Satan’s reaction to Chaos is actually quite similar to being shocked “stupidly good” by the sight of Eve.

Not only does the female body possess incredible, perhaps infinite, generative potential, it is also so awe-inspiring that it is able to shock its beholders into silence and even numbness. In this sense, it is no coincidence that Milton allows Satan, a character who is so active, and who seems to drive the first half of the narrative in the epic, to be shocked into a momentary inaction and “wariness” by the presence of female bodies. The second realization from this comparison is that this passage provides yet another example of how Milton raises Chaos so that it is equally as important as God. Although what Satan sees is Eve and not God directly, because Eve is a creation of God, Satan’s sheer awe at the sight of Eve is also partly because of his realization of God’s ability to create beauty. Therefore, the two passages show that both Chaos and God are equally able to arrest Satan’s movement by the mere sight of their grandiosity and power, which testifies to Milton’s acknowledgement of the awe-inspiring power of the female body as, perhaps, almost God-like.

However, the difference between the awesome nature of God and Chaos lies in the fact that whereas God’s sheer awe-inspiring nature is demarcated by a peaceful, harmless beauty, the awesome nature of Chaos carries a hint of mystery, danger, and sublimity. In Heaven, Milton describes its beauty:

From the pure Empyrean where he sits
High throned above all height [...]
And from his sight received
Beautitude past utterance (56 – 62).

God is described as pure, Empyrean, and above all else, beautiful. As his angelic hosts gaze upon him, they see nothing but “beautitudes past utterance”, unspeakable beauty, which further reminds the reader of the arresting power of God’s awe-inspiring nature. He is described as so

beautiful that it is beyond one's ability to speak of it, that his beauty can take away its beholder's ability to speak. In contrast, Milton describes Chaos as:

At length a universal hubbub wild
Of stunning sounds and voices all confused
Borne through the hollow dark assaults [Satan's] ear
With loudest vehemence (2, 951 – 54).

Chaos is sublime. As opposed to God's awe-inspiring nature, which is signified by a pure beauty, Chaos is much more dangerous and mysterious. Milton describes the noises in Chaos as confusing, assaulting, and vehement, suggesting that despite how much it awes Satan, he can never really feel safe inside it. As we take on the perspective of Satan journeying through the abyss, we cannot help but feel equally lost, equally confused and assaulted by the "stunning sounds of voice," and most importantly, we cannot but feel, like Satan, our insignificance compared to the endless Chaos that surrounds us. In this moment of confusion, we realize that despite Satan's massive size, described by Milton as like "that sea-beast / Leviathan, which God of all his works / Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream" (200 – 2), in the womb of Chaos, he is infinitely smaller than even "bees / In springtime" (768 – 69) pouring from their hive. Here, Milton departs from writers such as Daniel in that while they associate the womb with ideas of nurturing and calmness, the womb of Chaos is described as far less comforting and much more uncontrollable and wild. The epic transforms Chaos into a timeless and sublimely awe-inspiring mother that holds within her the potential for all creation. This crucial understanding demonstrates that, for Milton, there is not one, but two entities that exist "from the first," God and the vast abyss, and that both play a vital role in creating and maintaining Milton's boundless cosmos.

By using images of the female womb, Milton, like writers such as Reynalde and Daniel, acknowledges and elevates the authority of the female body, which further demonstrates that Milton's depiction of cosmic creation is in fact distinct from his predecessors. It is quite a wondrous choice for Milton to use the word "pregnant." Dennis Danielson has pointed out just how powerful and versatile this word is. He demonstrates that the word "pregnant" has always meant both being with child and being meaningful. He claims that the "first given definition of 'pregnant' is not 'expecting to give birth' but rather 'full of meaning'" (200). Although the latter meaning of "pregnant" has already, for the most part, disappeared from our contemporary vernacular, the *OED* reveals that it has been used with this definition in mind from as early as 1402 and as late as 1991. More importantly, Francis Bacon, someone Milton would have been very familiar with, uses the word "pregnant" in this way in his *Confession of Faith*. Bacon writes that "the continual history of the old world, and church of the Jews [is] pregnant of a perpetual allegory and shadow of the work of the redemption to follow" (I. 338/2). Consequently, by using the word "pregnant" to describe Chaos, Milton does not only feminize the space and provides a female companion to his masculine God, he also reminds us that Chaos, from the first, is meaningful.

Of course, Milton is not unprecedented in describing cosmic creation in terms of human reproduction. In *A Treatise of Melancholy*, for instance, Timothy Bright asserts as he discusses the origins of the universe:

I take [the spirit of man] to be an effectuall, and *pregnant*
substance, bred in all thinges, at what time the spirit of the Lord
did, as it were, *hatch*, and *breede* out all living thinges, out of that

Chaos mentioned in Genesis; which Chaos, as it was matter of
corporall, and palpable substance to all thinges (44, my emphasis).

There are some striking similarities between Bright and Milton. For instance, both authors employ reproductive metaphors in describing the first instance of cosmic creation. Additionally, Bright even seems to mirror Milton in comparing God to a dove. Whereas Milton states that God is “dove-like,” Bright presents a similar scene of a bird hatching the multiverse out of an egg. Moreover, by recognizing Chaos as the “corporal and palpable substance to all things,” Bright also seems to mirror Milton’s suggestion that Chaos contains the raw materials of the unborn universe. In acknowledging these similarities, therefore, both authors demonstrate a commitment towards elevating the status of Chaos as a feminine space.

In addition to elevating the importance of the female body, the indispensability of Chaos as a generative site in Milton’s epic brings forth many significant implications for the male body as well. Milton builds upon the mother/father God/Chaos dynamic so that the womb can also play a role in feminizing the masculine bodies of the male characters in his epic. Firstly, using the dichotomy between God/Chaos in cosmic creation, Milton joins writers such as Daniel and begins to discuss how elements of the maternal influences the composition of his “advent’rous song” (I, 14), feminizing his own masculine body. Examine, for instance, the similarities between the metaphors of cosmic creation and Milton’s discussion of poetic inspiration. As the narrator reveals his struggles with blindness in his second invocation, Milton writes:

Ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off [...] So much the rather thou celestial Light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers

Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight (3, 45 – 55).

The first similarity lies in the metaphors of planting. As Satan in Book 1 describes God planting generations of humans in the new world produced by Chaos, so Milton compares his poetic inspiration in this invocation to that of God planting eyes in his mind. The language of reproduction is again at play. God is still the planter and the sower of seeds, but this time, it is Milton's own mind is the site for God's implantation and impregnation. Secondly, Milton also uses the metaphor of illumination to link his poetic inspiration to the reproductive nature of cosmic creation. To prove this, let us turn to Rumrich as he offers an insightful interpretation of the two passage side by side which will reveal much about the connection between the womb of Chaos and Milton's mind. He argues that Milton:

Explicitly relates the "ever-during dark" he inhabits to the darkness of chaos, and, like that cosmic womb, he awaits the "piercing ray" of "Celestial Light." The imagined introduction of celestial light into Milton's mind thus recalls the dynamics of creation, which figure into the same invocation. [...] His capacity to emit rays of physical vision may have been "cut off," therefore, but he suggests that this wound has enabled him to experience the gestation of an epic within his mind (101).

The metaphors of planting and illumination entwine Milton's poetic inspiration with that of cosmic creation, allowing him to feminize his own body by transforming his own poetic mind into a darkened womb of Chaos.

Satan is another character whose mind is transformed into a womb. In the demon's encounter with Sin for the first time, Sin recounts her birth from Satan's head:

All on a sudden miserable pain
Surprised thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum
In darkness, while they head flames thick and fast
Threw forth, till one the left side op'ning wide [...]
Out of thy head I sprung (2, 751 – 58).

The most immediate similarity is that Sin, like Milton's epic, is depicted as a brainchild. Whereas Milton's mind womb allows for the figurative birth of his epic, Milton depicts a literal mind womb through Satan's birth of Sin. In addition, as Sin is both a literal character in the epic and a concept for disobedience, this scene reinforces the connection between the two instances of birth. Satan's birth is further feminized through Milton's addition of pain. Like what a mother feels during childbirth, Milton demonstrates that Satan's creation of Sin is also marked by "a sudden miserable pain." Finally, like Milton's previous two portrayals of birth, the metaphor of illumination is once again prevalent in the passage. Moments before Sin's birth, Satan's is described with "dim" eyes and swimming "in darkness." Then, the moment of illumination, signified by the "head flames thick and fast" occurs at the same time that Sin is born. Of course, the difference between the lights that illuminate are significant. Whereas the cosmos and Milton's mind are illuminated by celestial light, Satan's illumination dawns in flames, illustrating the separation between celestial and satanic births. Nevertheless, the above passage demonstrates that Satan is much like Milton in that both their bodies are feminized by the womb.

The third and final male body feminized by Milton with the womb is Adam. In the account of Eve's creation, Adam states that God:

Opened [his] left side, and took
From thence a rib, with cordial spirits warm,
And life-blood streaming fresh; wide was the wound (8, 465 – 67).

The first thing to note is that Adam's body opens from the left side in providing the material to create Eve, connecting Eve's creation to the birth of Sin, who also comes out from an opening on Satan's left. Additionally, we can also point to the image of the "rib" to make a further argument about Adam's womb. Forsyth points out how the language of the "rib" is reminiscent of the way Mammon takes ribs of gold out of the womb of Hell in order to build Pandemonium (83). In the case of Mammon, the ribs of gold are the raw material that is used for the creation of Pandemonium. By describing God taking a rib from Adam in the creation of Eve, Milton essentially imbues Adam's body with the raw materials for creation. From this realization Forsyth claims that "Eve is 'born', in the story Milton found in Genesis and elaborates, not from a woman but from Adam. His is the womb, or the wide wound, from which she is taken" (83). The womb, therefore, feminizes the male bodies in the epic.

It is perhaps not so surprising that Milton feminizes the male body since Milton has explicitly stated in the epic that Angels can take on forms of both sexes (1, 423 – 31). However, it is nevertheless worth noting that Milton feminizes the human male figures too, not just the angels. This idea has also been discussed in seemingly different vocabulary by critics such as William Kerrigan, Michael Lieb, and Elizabeth Sauer, who argue that

Beneath the dogmatic planks of [Milton's] work, in the nooks and
crannies of its symbols and its suggestiveness, [there is] a
subconscious inclination toward bisexuality (Lieb, 84).

This “bisexuality”² pointed out by the two critics is what leads Kerrigan to assign the title of “poetess” (Lieb, 84) to Milton. Although calling Milton a poetess may be a little extreme, and Lieb and Sauer’s arguments about Milton’s attitude towards this “bisexuality” are questionable, there can be no doubt that these analyses are extremely significant as they demonstrate that there is a presence of ambiguity when it comes to Milton’s treatment of the male body. Through the installation of a womb, many of Milton’s male characters become androgynous hybrid figures like the hermaphrodites from Plato’s *Symposium* or Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, suggesting their “ambiguity, duplicity [...] and rich potentiality” (Del Lucchese, 327), albeit with one major difference. Whereas both Ovid and Plato emphasize the existence of both male and female genitalia in their hermaphrodite figures, Milton is much more focused on the reproductive abilities of the hybridity that results from this fusion. For instance, Plato’s *symposium* describes the hermaphrodite as beings who have:

A single head for both faces, which looked out in opposite directions; four ears; two sets of genitals [...] they did their begetting and child-bearing not in each other but in the ground, like cicadas” (189 - 91).

Despite the existence of both male and female genitals, for Plato, the female aspect of the hermaphrodite is not the womb, as the soil seems to take on that role instead. It is unclear what the use of the female genital is on Plato’s hermaphrodite, and Ovid seems to express a similar attitude in his description of the hermaphrodite as well. He mentions the existence of both genitals like Plato, but omits how reproduction is accomplished. The male figures in Milton’s epic are therefore similar to the hermaphrodite figures of Ovid and Plato in that they signify a

² Although Lieb and Kerrigan uses the term bisexuality, they are both pointing to a kind of gender-fluidity and androgyny by this word. The subsequent analysis will use the words androgyny and ambiguity.

rich potentiality. Ultimately, Milton shows that, because the womb is essential for any type of creation to occur, any male attempt to create would require the potential of the womb. The female body is therefore exceptionally powerful in *Paradise Lost* because not only is Chaos raised to a God-like stature due to the existence of the womb, Milton suggests that his male figures are, in many ways, androgynous figures, or hermaphrodites, because the very evidence of their creative capabilities is a signifier of their sexual ambiguity or gender-fluidity.

However, despite the seemingly very open acknowledgement from Milton of the powers of the female body, there still seems to be a conflict, or even paradox, in Milton's treatment of it. Although the epic seems to recognize the indispensability of the womb in any form of creation, it nevertheless acknowledges a hierarchy between male and female bodies. The female body, it seems, is still ultimately lower than the male body in reproduction. As Fissell has suggested, it seems as if Milton treats the womb as simply a blank, lifeless site, or a canvas, for masculine inspiration and creativity to mold and shape. For instance, return to the image of the womb of Chaos as described in book 2 by Belial. He calls it "void of motion," suggesting its inability to take action. Moreover, God also seems to hold total control over Chaos in terms of actually making and naming the cosmos. Take, for instance, Milton's portrayal of cosmic creation in book 7:

"Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,

This be thy just circumference, O world."

Thus God the heav'n created, thus the earth. (7, 228 – 32).

Danielson takes this passage and makes an insightful point. He argues that

God utters the great speech act whereby he names the territory

demarcated within Chaos *world* – despite the fact that there is as

yet nothing else qualitatively to distinguish this territory from the rest of Chaos (43, my emphasis).

Milton devalues the generative powers of the womb by making it almost entirely void of energy and power to even name and distinguish itself. Even though nothing physically changes, God's words are enough to take certain areas of Chaos out of itself. Although there is a female entity participating in creation within the epic, its role is exceptionally limited and seems to be almost completely dictated by its masculine counterpart.

Furthermore, Milton also seems to strip away much of the agency from his own mind-womb. He constantly emphasizes how his mind is darkness and cast away from experiencing beauty until it is illumined by divine light. The womb of his mind again becomes a passive recipient as opposed to an active participant in the creation of his epic. Some of his other poetry suggests this idea as well, like the sonnet on his blindness. Finally, Adam and his body womb is also relinquished of its agency in many ways. Even though Adam provides his rib, Adam is entirely unable to control when he gives the rib, and he also does nothing in actually shaping Eve into who she is. Thus, Milton's attitude towards the womb in creation is quite complicated. On the one hand, he goes out of his way to demonstrate the necessity of the womb in creation, yet, he then goes to make the womb subservient in almost every way to the phallic powers of creation.

An extremely problematic and almost contradictory aspect of Milton's epic here presents itself. In *Paradise Lost*, various forms of creation, be that of poetry, of human beings, or even of universes, happen through the combined effort of both the womb and the phallus, and the disappearance of either side would take away the possibility of creation, suggesting that Milton elevates the generative powers of the female body. However, at the same time, the womb is also

treated as lifeless and incapable of any action until the masculine force enacts upon it, implying that the masculine creative force is still ultimately more significant than that of feminine creative force. Consequently, Milton's epic presents a complicated treatment of femininity as he both acknowledges and denies the agency and power of the female body.

Milton uses the idea of the womb in order to feminize Chaos as a space and the various male bodies of his epic. The various ways in which Milton both elevates and devalues the female body is also illustrated in investigating Milton's feminizing of Chaos. In the subsequent chapters, other characteristics of the female body will be analyzed and explored in relation to Milton's feminization of Chaos as God's female companion.

Double-Formed Spaces: The Mutable Bodies of Sin, Chaos, and Hell

In *Paradise Lost*, Sin and Chaos are portrayed as physical characters as well as spaces of double-formed femininity. Borrowing from his English predecessors such as Spenser and Shakespeare, Milton uses the idea of the double-formed body in the epic as a signifier of satanic monstrosity and a kind of mutable transitivity, a necessary transportation link between the spaces of his cosmos. Hell, as one of the central “nether” spaces, also demonstrates the ways in which characteristics of double-formedness and transitivity are expressed through non-gendered and colonizing terminology. For Milton, these double-formed bodies and spaces, both monstrous and mutable, both gendered and not, endow Milton’s multiverse with a fluid, unbounded quality characterized not by structure, but by distortion, suggesting that the spatial boundaries in the cosmos are easily transgressed and blurred. In the end, Milton seems to demonstrate a kind of double-formedness in his own attitudes towards the spatial metaphorization of the female body, suggesting the significance of the mutable and the double formed.

By transforming Sin into a physical character in the epic, Milton inscribes her body with a kind of double-formed femininity seemingly typical of English writers before and around his time. We are first introduced to Sin near the end of Book 2 as we follow Satan along his journey through darkness. As Satan lays eyes upon Sin, he asks:

What thing thou art, *thus double-formed*, and why

In this infernal vale first met thou call’st

Me father? (741 – 43, my emphasis).

Elizabeth Sauer has pointed out that idea of the double-formed is, for Milton, a key characteristic of the female body (208). This trait allows him to connection Sin’s body with the bodies of

various cosmic spaces. There are many ways that Sin's double-formedness takes shape. Firstly, she is both a physical, spatial body, demonstrated by her encounter with Satan, and an abstract concept for disobedience and suffering, illustrated, for instance, in Milton's line "thus Eve yet sinless" (9, 659). By this division, Milton suggests that Sin is depicted as a hybrid of the literal and abstract. Moreover, Sin's hybridity takes form in her physique. In Satan's first meeting with Sin, Milton offers this description of her:

The one seemed woman to the waist, and fair,
But ended foul in many a scaly fold
Voluminous and vast, a serpent armed
With mortal sting (2, 649 – 53).

In this passage, Sin is clearly depicted as a mutable, dichotomous figure. She is both a "fair" woman, and a "foul" serpent.

In comparison to Milton's Sin, many "foul" women in the literature that precede Milton are also endowed with a similar double-formedness. For instance, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Scylla is portrayed as a double-formed female monster:

Scylla came there and waded in waist deep,
then saw her loins defiled with barking shapes.
[...] she ran and tried to drive them back and feared
the boisterous canine jaws (Ovid, 14. 55 – 60).

Additionally, in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Lear claims near the end of the play that women:

Down from the waist they are centaurs,
Though women all above. But to the girdle do the
Gods inherit; beneath is all the fiends'. There's hell,

There's darkness, there's the sulphurous pit! (4, 6, 140 – 144).

The characters of Error in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* are also given the same type of double-formedness. Spenser writes that Error is

Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide,
But th'other halfe did womans shape retaine,
Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine.

[...] Pointed with mortall sting (1, 1, 122 – 29).

All three instances exemplify that Milton's depiction of Sin is not without historical precedents. Scylla is surrounded by monstrous hounds at the waist like Sin. In the case of Error, the connection is equally obvious. Just like Sin, Error is also half-snake, half-woman. In fact, both Spenser and Milton use the same terms, "mortal sting," to portray the lower half of the women. In the case of *King Lear*, Lear uses Hellish imagery to describe the lower half of women, once again establishing a connection to Sin. Not to mention, of course, the trope surrounding these descriptions of double-formedness in that the waist is always the site where the women character's bodily mutations take place. Therefore, Milton's transformation of Sin into a character in the epic allows him to join many of his literary predecessors, and more importantly, to give a specific term, "double-formed," to this kind of female mutability of the body.

Milton uses the idea of female double-formedness as represented by Sin to feminize Chaos as a space. For instance, Milton employs contradictory language to describe Chaos, highlighting its mutable nature like Sin. Recall the first lines describing Chaos through Satan's gaze:

Without dimension, where length, breadth, and heighth,
And time and place are lost [...]

For Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry, four champions fierce
Strive here for mast'ry, and to battle bring
Their embryon atoms (2, 893 – 900).

First of all, Milton reveals how Chaos distorts and contorts the boundaries between time, space, length, and height, drawing a connection to the uncertainty of Sin's body during her first meeting with Satan. More importantly, Milton reveals that Chaos is far more double-formed than Sin. Whereas Sin is described in terms of dichotomies such as snake/woman, Chaos is illustrated as a combination of a multitude of elements. It is not just a dichotomy between hot and cold. It is hot, cold, moist, dry, as well as many other things. Chaos is also a double-formed space like Sin, but it is also much more double-formed than she is. Additionally, like Sin, Chaos is also a physical space and an entity, suggesting abstractness and literality at the same time. Satan speaks to Chaos and receives guidance on his journey, yet Chaos is also frequently described, as I've already demonstrated in the previous section, as a void and as nothingness.

Furthermore, in what Danielson calls the "Cosmography of Milton's Multiverse," he suggests that Chaos surrounds all the created universes within the Multiverse. He argues that

The Multiverse as a whole is everything that exists beyond God himself and includes [...] (a) an infinite Chaos; (b) the empyreal Heaven; (c) Hell; (d) our "world," Universe, or Cosmos' and (e) any other worlds God might create from the stuff of Chaos. From the view point of Hell, Heaven, and our Cosmos, therefore, Chaos remains literally "the great out-of-doors" – and Milton depicts it as such from the gates of Hell (Book 2), the gates of Heaven (book 7),

and the “cosmic hatch” that opens onto as well as out from our Universe (50).

From this perspective, there is no doubt that the body of Chaos also holds a sense of double-formedness within it. In fact, it seems that Chaos is actually far more mutable in nature than Sin. That is to say, Chaos is double-formed because it contains both Eden and Hell, the locations where Eve and Satan reside respectively, thus spatially representing the dichotomy of purity and impurity as seen on Sin’s body. More importantly, Danielson’s cosmography also demonstrates that Chaos includes Heaven as well as all the other universes and worlds that are or will be created in the future. Chaos as an entity mirrors this sentiment as it speaks to Satan:

Your dungeon stretching far and wide beneath;
Now lately heav’n and earth, another world
Hung o’er my realm, linked in a golden chain (2, 1002 – 5).

These passages demonstrate that the body of Chaos is an assemblage of multiple universes, a body that also holds a multitude of other bodies. Whereas Sin is a double-formed mutable body, Milton’s Chaos is multi-formed and even more mutable.

One of the most significant functions of this mutability, it seems, is to associate the female body with monstrosity and impurity. In the same way that Shakespeare and Lear speak of their women as hideous, horrible, and monstrous, Milton also portrays Sin as a “foul serpent.” Additionally, Sauer argues that Milton furthers Sin’s grotesque description by comparing her to Ovid’s Scylla, one of literature’s classical monsters. She argues that

Milton [...] projects his anxieties about personal and textual mutability onto sites of (satanic) contagion and onto the female body, which is depicted as “double-formed,” monstrous (208).

Sauer's insightful comment allows us to recognize a comparison of the depiction of the Hellhounds that surround Sin to those that attach themselves to Scylla. In Milton's version of Sin, he writes:

A cry of Hell-hounds never ceasing barked
With wide Cerberean mouths full lound, and rung
A hideous peal (2, 653 – 56).

Both Sin and Scylla are surrounded by hounds; they both are tormented by these hounds. In fact, as Rumrich points out, Sin's Hellhounds are "far more abhorrent than the ones that plagued Ovid's Scylla" (30) as Milton states:

Far less abhorred than these [Hellhounds]
Vexed Scylla bathing in the sea that parts
Calabria from the hoarse Trinacrian shore (2, 659 – 61).

By aligning Sin with one of literature's classical monsters through the idea of the double-formedness, Milton suggests the monstrosity and grotesqueness that female double-formedness signifies. In fact, Milton also portrays Chaos as a monstrous space due to its double-formed, or perhaps multi-formed, nature. Milton writes that the existence of the primal elements of Chaos is marked by a battle for mastery, suggesting a kind of eternal conflict within Chaos as opposed to a harmonized, peaceful existence. Thus the eternal conflict inside Chaos becomes attributed to its mutable nature, and serves to signify its monstrosity.

Moreover, not only does Milton appropriate female double-formedness as a marker of monstrosity, he even suggests that this double-formedness is satanic as seen through the images of the snake and the woman. In seeing Sin as a woman-snake hybrid, it seems difficult to not recall the encounter between Satan and Eve. The snake half of Sin represents Satan as a snake in

Eden, and the woman represents Eve. It is almost as if a foreshadowing of the fall of humanity is embodied in Sin's physical appearance. Furthermore, the connection between Sin's body and Satan's temptation of Eve becomes revealed through an analysis of the formal structure of the description of Sin. Milton begins by presenting the top half of Sin as a beautiful woman, ending with a line break at "fair." However, the next line begins with a reversal, "but," which is then followed by the description of the snake-like second half of Sin's body, suggesting a kind of interruption or disruption of the image of beauty that is initially presented, recalling the process of Satanic perversion. In this way, Sin's body becomes the site upon which a literal, physical, representation of humanity's first sin can be enacted; her body's double-formedness then becomes aligned with the idea of Satanic perversion.

Sin's bodily metamorphosis into double-formedness is also exceptionally reminiscent of satanic perversion. Sin says as she recalls the birth of Death:

At last this odious offspring whom thou seest
Thine own begotten, breaking violent way
Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain
Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
Transformed (2, 781 – 85).

Sin's transformation is a result of Satan's impregnation. After she submits to Satan's sexual temptation, she seems to transform physically into the shape that will then tempt and pervert the purity of Eve. Moreover, this passage also demonstrates that Sin's birth is "with fear and pain," which once again connects to God's curse upon womankind in Book 10, a paraphrase of Genesis 3:

Thy sorrow I will greatly multiply

By thy conception; children thou shalt bring
In sorrow forth (10, 193 – 95).

The sorrow that Milton repeats in this passage is undoubtedly connected to the fear and pain that Sin experiences in giving birth to Death. Milton's description of Sin thus demonstrates the double-formed nature of her body as beyond simply monstrous, but also Satanic.

However, despite the misogynistic way in which Milton uses the concept of female double-formedness to feminize both Sin and Chaos, Milton also takes this same characteristic as a metaphor for growth and progression, even though they may not necessarily be for the better, suggesting a complexity to his treatment of this concept. In the epic, the double-formed female bodies and spaces, in addition to being monstrous, also serve the role of gatekeepers. For instance, the moments of transition in Satan's mission to infiltrate Heaven is frequently facilitated by double-formed bodies. It is Sin who is given the "power key [...] with charge to keep / These gates [of Hell] forever shut, which none can pass / Without [her] op'ning" (2, 775 – 77), demonstrating that the spatial transition between Hell and Chaos is similar to the double-formed body of Sin. Moreover, Sin not only assists Satan in his spatial progression, she also seems to facilitate the progression of Satan's character. Whereas Satan is characterized as a dominant figure in Hell as demonstrated by many of his speeches in which he claims Hell as his kingdom, in Chaos, he is depicted as much more insignificant and powerless. For example, Milton describes Satan's difficult journey through Chaos as such:

The strong rebuff of some tumultuous cloud
Instinct with fire and nitre hurried him
As many miles aloft (2, 936 – 38).

Whereas Satan seems to be in control for much of his time in Hell, Milton informs us that in Chaos, he is the one being controlled. In this passage, it is Chaos that “hurried him” back and forth through the “tumultuous cloud” of endless space, revealing to us that Satan does little but submit to the “fire and nitre” that stumbles him through space. By using Sin as a gatekeeper, or a facilitator of Satan’s transitions through space, Milton seems to align transitions between spatial boundaries to the physical boundaries of a double-formed body.

Because of Sin, Satan crosses the boundaries of Hell into Chaos. This transition is a process of growth and progression through time as well. As Satan steps into different spaces, he also steps into different stages in his individual journey. Thus, Milton shows that the boundaries of double-formed bodies becomes a metaphor for progression and transition between different stages of Satan’s existence, suggesting that double-formed bodies represent a kind of growth or even nurturing. This idea of transitioning between stages is facilitated by mutable bodies, ultimately demonstrating that the mutable and double-formed female bodies not only signify fluid movement between physical boundaries and thresholds, but also the fluid transitions between abstract boundaries in the stages of one’s existence. Thus, Milton’s epic presents double-formedness as a signifier of a kind of transitiveness, a vital transportation link between the spaces of the multiverse.

Secondly, bodily and spatial double-formedness is also used by Milton as a metaphor for mediation and neutrality in the sense that a double-formed body suggests a presence of different sides, marking the neutral space between opposing figures, spaces, or viewpoints. Both Sin and Chaos act as mediators in the epic. For example, when Satan and Death first meet, their initial, potentially deadly, conflict is met by these words from Sin:

O father, what intends they hand, [...]

Against thy only son? What fury O son,
Possesses thee to bend that mortal dark
Against thy father's head? (2, 727 – 34).

After this speech, Milton writes: “she spake, and at her words the Hellish pest / Forbore” (735 – 36). Sin, whose body physically marks two opposing ideas (be it innocence/perversion, or snake/human, etc.) and the middle ground between the opposition, here literally becomes the mediator between the conflict between Satan and Death. More importantly, the result of this mediation is the de-escalation of opposition, suggesting the mediating nature of double-formed bodies.

Another example of this mediating neutrality can be found in Satan's conversation with Chaos the entity. Lost in his journey, Satan is met by these words from Chaos: “I know thee, stranger, who thou art, / I saw and heard” (2, 990 – 993). Combined with the description quoted earlier in this section that explains how Chaos watches as different worlds are created inside it, it becomes apparent that Chaos is portrayed as a kind of eternal watcher that, despite having worlds created inside of it, mostly stays at a distance from the conflict between the angels and demons. Although it can be argued that Chaos does seem to assist Satan by directing him towards his goal, it is also suggested that Chaos's involvement is for its own purposes, “Havoc and spoil and ruin are my gain” (1009), and is in no way due to its desire to actually help God or Satan gain the upper hand. Thus, the double-formed female body also serves to mark the middle ground between opposing ideologies and factions. Milton suggests that the female body represents moderation, neutrality, and the in-between space. For these reasons, Milton's treatment of female double-formedness is quite complicated, perhaps even double-formed itself. On the one hand, female bodies are monstrous and impure due to their double-formed and mutable nature, yet, on

the other hand, female bodies are also mediators and facilitators of growth, fluidity, and transition between barriers and boundaries.

The idea of double-formedness also presents itself through non-gendered and colonialist terms in *Paradise Lost*. Hell itself exemplifies in a non-gendered way many of these same qualities of double-formedness and transitivity, especially through its colonizing terminology. For instance, Hell's double-formedness is connected to a sense of distortion through Milton's use of seemingly contradictory language when describing its locations. Near the beginning of Book 1, Satan first sees Hell as

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe (61 – 64, my emphasis).

From the perspective of double-formedness, the idea of a “darkness visible” undoubtedly fits the mould. Milton sees Hell as a hybrid of both light and darkness that distorts the nature of both. Although it is possible to see the “sights of woe” that Hell has to offer, the eternal fire that surrounds it does not actually give any light for the demons to see. Hell seems to be double-formed in that there is both light and no light, both darkness and the absence of darkness.

Another example can be found in Milton's description of Pandaemonium:

The gates
And porches wide, but chief the spacious hall
Thick swarmed [...] They but now who seemed
In bigness to surpass Earth's Giant sons
Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room

Throng numberless (1, 760 – 80).

In this passage, Milton discusses spatial distortion in Hell. He first illustrates that the halls of Pandaemonium are paradoxically both “spacious” and “narrow,” implying a kind of distortion in that there are no fixed spatial definitions or markers that can properly describe its size.

Pandaemonium in this passage seems to contort in size in different moments in time. This spatial distortion or contortion is then revealed in the bodies of the demons as well. In Hell, Milton describes them as both so big as to “surpass Earth’s Giant sons” and so small that they are “less than smallest dwarfs,” or as massive Leviathans and tiny bees in springtime.

The sense of spatial distortion and the breaking down of bodily and spatial boundaries is perhaps exemplified by Death, a being born inside Hell. In describing Death’s shape, Milton demonstrates the impossibility to define Death’s body or anatomy:

If shape it might be called that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,
For each seemed either (2, 667 – 70).

Death, as the sole birth inside Hell, appropriately becomes the embodiment of a pure form of Hell’s hybridity in which boundaries and borders are not only distinguishably hybrid, but are fundamentally, as Milton says, indistinguishable. In Hell, it seems, light and darkness, big and small, and possibly other rigid markers of boundaries are no longer as strictly definable. Rather, Milton suggests that Hell’s double-formedness gives space a kind of fluctuating nature, making Hell a space where bodily and spatial boundaries can transform and mutate. Furthermore, as a clearly masculine figure, Death also allows Milton to suggest that mutability and double-formedness can be expressed in a non-gendered way.

Using this same passage, Rumrich suggests that the totality of Death's hybridity is a way in which Milton draws a parallel between Heavenly and Hellish beings, as he argues:

The description resembles references elsewhere in the epic to flexible corporeality and comprehensive functionality of angels, "uncompounded .../ Nor tied or manacled with joint or limb" (31).

The distortion and fluidity of Hell's double-formedness is also characterised as heavenly.

Moreover, double-formedness seems to be Milton's terminology for considering a kind of colonial hybridity from spatial perspectives. For instance, Hell's double-formedness allows it to transform into a hybrid space, a combination of two English colonies during his time that are on opposite sides of the world: North America and India. On the one hand, Milton seems to demonstrate that the relationship between Heaven and Hell is similar to that between England and the "New World" by using much of English colonial policy towards North America to describe the expulsion of Satan and the demons to Hell. For instance, Martin J. Evans argues that the expulsion of Satan and his demons is closely aligned to the "purgative rationale" for colonizing America. He states:

In tract after tract America was represented as a vast penal colony in which the nation's unemployed malcontents, criminals, dissenters, and heretics could conveniently be confined at a safe distance from civilized society. So when Satan suggests that a society that is "surcharg'd with potent multitude" is likely to experience internal "broiles" (Milton, 2, 835 - 37) he is articulating the standard justification for establishing precisely the kind of penal colony he himself now occupies (32).

By aligning the attitudes of the English mainland towards North America with Heaven's relocation of the fallen angels to Hell, Milton establishes the allegorical connection between his epic and English imperialism of the New World.

In addition to depicting Hell as the New World colonies, the way Milton orientalises Hell also allows him to suggest that Hell is a double-formed colony of Heaven. For instance, the demonic army is described as a battalion "with orient colours waving" (I, 546), Satan is also said to be the "great Sultan waving to direct" this army of fallen angels. Moreover, the high consulate of the demons, Pandaemonium, is also given oriental depictions:

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Show'rs on her kings barbaric pearl and gold (2, 1 – 4).

In this passage, not only do we see the wealth of orientalist language Milton employs to portray Satan's throne, Milton also makes direct reference to two Eastern locations where England attempted to establish colonial presence. Ormus refers to Hormuz, an island under Portuguese rule during Milton's time that was attacked and taken over by England between February and May of 1622 (Campbell 22). And of course, Ind refers to India, which was under Dutch rule, and was also a site where English and Dutch rivalry escalated into violence in 1623. In examining these passages, it is demonstrated that what Evans calls the penal colony of Hell is not simply the New World colonies, but the colonies in Asia as well. Julie Cyzewski expresses a similar point as she argues:

Comparing Satan to eastern rulers through his throne not only
paints him as a "barbaric" oriental king, but as a king who is under

assault from God's empire, much as Asian rulers were facing the intrusion of budding European empires (213).

There seems to be a connection between Hell and England's Asian colonies. Yet oriental language alone does not entirely solidify this connection because Milton uses similar language to describe Eden as well. For example, critic Eric Song points out that "In book 4, another simile compares the 'native perfume' of Eden to the 'Sabeian odour from the spicy shore / Of Arabia the blest' that cheer passing sailors" (199). If both Eden and Hell are portrayed with oriental imagery, then it is not enough to point only to the oriental language in illustrating the connection between Hell and the Asian colonies.

Satan and the demons further reinforce the Colony/split space metaphors by speaking of their rebellion as a resistance against a colonial power. For example, Satan declares after examining Hell that

Who now is sov'reign can dispose and bid
What shall be right: farthest from him is best
Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme
Above his equals (1, 246 – 49).

For Satan, there is no actual disparity between God and himself when it comes to "reason," or essentially the justification of rule based on rhetorical or social standards, and that the only real hierarchy exists in God being arbitrarily more powerful than Satan can ever be. Michael Bryson expresses a similar view as he argues that God in the epic is "conceived in terms of military might and kingly power [...] obsessed with his own power and glory, manipulative, defensive" (25). From a subaltern perspective, this vision of God combined with Satan's justification for rebellion aligns almost perfectly with colonial resistance. For both Satan and those living under

colonial rule, they are dominated by those who do not necessarily hold any logical or reasonable authority to exercise this domination with the exception of an arbitrary military power. Precisely due to this striking proximity between Satan's rebellion and colonial resistance, Anne-Julia Zwierlein argues that "Post-colonial writers, while on the one hand denouncing the Milton they have been taught as an 'imperial instrument,' on the other frequently succeed in exploiting the subversive potential of Milton's pictures of rebellion" (406). Furthermore, Cyzewski also claims that "Satan's subversive potential for subaltern readers must be considered in readings of *Paradise Lost* and imperialism" (214). It is the combination of Satan's attitude towards his colonized position as well as Milton use of orientalist language that transforms Hell into an Eastern colony. Consequently, colonization becomes a powerful metaphor of a multi-formed identity in space. This metaphor transforms Hell into an undoubtedly hybrid, double-formed colony of Heaven, a space that represents both the New World and regions of Asia. With this hybridity, Milton once again suggests the mutability of space and the breaking down of bodily and spatial boundaries.

The bodies of Sin, Hell and Chaos demonstrate the ways bodily and spatial hybridity are characterized by Milton as a kind of double-formedness and are used to feminize the cosmic space of Chaos. Additionally, hybridity in *Paradise Lost* is a marker for monstrosity, fluidity, change, and neutrality, demonstrating that *Paradise Lost* presents its multiverse as constantly changing, distorting, and transgressing the rigid boundaries of space.

Grotesque Spaces: Milton's Incontinent Paradise

In addition to being a procreative space and both monstrous and interstitial, Milton's feminized space also seems to be a leaky body. By Milton's time, the leaky body trope, characterized by excessiveness and excretion, already holds many significant implications for the literature that utilizes it. Firstly, the leaky body's inability to manage its bodily fluids is frequently inscribed onto female bodies to signify an incorrigibility or wildness which then becomes a way to uphold certain patriarchal values. At the same time, however, considering the works of Bakhtin and Paster, the wild, excessive, and excretory aspects of the leaky body also hold a kind of subversive power that, in the words of Paster, serves as "a means of leveling social distinctions" (28). This section will explore the ways Milton's epic engages both these implications of the leaky body from a cosmological perspective. I will argue that *Paradise Lost's* close engagement with the concept of the leaky body in relation to various spaces in the multiverse suggests Milton acknowledges both its incorrigible and the subversive powers. On the one hand, Milton aligns the traits of the leaky body in a gendered way to feminize spaces in order to emphasize the wildness of femininity, reinforcing the need for masculine authority in the multiverse, similar to the way he uses the womb images I have presented in the first section. Yet, on the other hand, Milton also employs the subversive (or what Bakhtin would call degrading) powers of the leaky body, inconsistently gendered in this case, to level or eradicate the hierarchical distinctions between Heavenly and Hellish spaces and between masculinity and femininity.

It is no surprise that many pieces of literature during Milton's time, ranging from medical papers to stage plays, represent the female body as a "leaky vessel" (Paster, 25), considering that the physiologically founded "disorderliness" with women, that is to say, certain misguided

characterizations of women as “rampant sexual animals” (Stallybrass, 142), were so prevalent that even female medical practitioners accepted absurd theories such as “the wandering womb” (Davis, 124). Around Milton’s time, it seems that this leakiness, or what Mikhail Bakhtin names as a trait of the “grotesque body,” is most often expressed through literature by an emphasis on a body’s physical openings, focusing, for instance, on the anus, mouth, or the open womb. For Bakhtin, these interconnected openings of the body relate to one another through the production of excretory matter. As he claims:

All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic
[...] the main events in the life of the grotesque body, the acts of
the bodily drama, take place in this sphere. Eating, drinking,
defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose,
sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, [and birth] (317).

Of course, as Peter Stallybrass argues, Bakhtin himself “concentrates on the body as locus of class conflict to the exclusion of gender” (123 – 24), that is to say, that he does not isolate these elements of the grotesque body as culturally feminine in his theory. However, as Paster points out, the grotesque body, especially its excretory and leaky aspects, is often inscribed on female bodies. She argues that

Discourse [in Renaissance and Early Modern England] inscribes
women as leaky vessel by isolating one element of the female
body’s material expressiveness – its production of fluids – as
excessive, hence either disturbing or shameful [...] women’s
bodily self-control or, more precisely, the representation of a
particular kind of uncontrol, [is seen] as a function of gender (25).

In this passage, Paster describes how the female body, due to its supposedly excessive fluid production, is thought to be disturbing and shameful. This aspect of the female body becomes something ugly, undesirable and, as Bakhtin claims, grotesque.

Moreover, Paster further argues that much of the historical discourse around the leaky female body at the time also suggest that women tend to be the more changeable and unstable sex, and thus require masculine control or management. She claims that

Representations of the female body as a leaking vessel display that body as beyond the control of the female subject, and thus as threatening the acquisitive goals of the family and its maintenance of status and power (25).

In other words, the leakiness of the female body threatened the “patriarchal family’s [attempt to] streamline itself for more efficient property acquisition [and] social mobility” (Davis, 126). It is this supposed biological instability, as it seems, that is mapped onto the temperament of the female gender as a whole. The supposed inability of the female body to control its fluids becomes the analogy to assume an inability of the female gender to control themselves in other ways, such as their behaviors, rationality, or even their abilities in speech. As Peter Stallybrass has argued, the bodily openness of women is also historically used to link women with what Paster calls “excessive verbal fluency” or “garrulousness” (25), further supporting the notion that leakiness, as a function of the female body at the time, is a metaphor for a kind of instability in women. Wildness of the female body, it seems, is produced anatomically through the “excessive” production of fluids and excretions.

Moreover, women’s association with the cold and wet humours served to further the instability and wildness that was typically attributed to the female body (Zemon Davis, 124).

Take, for instance, the words of Helkiah Crooke, the royal physician to James I, in his *Microcosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man*:

We say, that these are demonstrative signes of a cold temperament [...] that females are more wanton and petulant then Males, wee thinke hapneth because of the impotencie of their minds [...] that is by reason of their colde Temperament which cannot discusse the reliques of the Aliment; adde hereto that the blood of women is colder and rawer then the bloud of men. (276, 1615 edition).

Thus female instability, in this case marked by what Crooke calls the “wanton and petulant,” is closely associated with their “cold temperament.” Added to the fact that this text is littered with references to “Galen and his Booke,” we see the ways in which Galenic humoralism is connected with feminine instability as well as the leaky female body. From these perspectives, the leakiness of the female body is, in many ways, a metaphor to represent the wildness and incorrigibility of the female body.

Another aspect of the leaky body is that it can be used as a tool for what Bakhtin calls degradation, which is quite close to a form of subversion. In his discussion of Rabelais’s works, Bakhtin suggests that the grotesque body generates a grotesque realism that serves to degrade or level certain pretensions of nobility and the strict proprieties of the upper class. For instance, Bakhtin argues that bodily excretion as demonstrated in Rabelais serves to demolish hierarchies by bringing down those on top. He claims:

We must not forget that urine (as well as dung) is gay matter, which degrades and relieves at the same time, transforming fear into laughter. If dung is a link between body and earth, urine is a

link between body and sea [...] Dung and urine lend a bodily character to matter, to the world, to the cosmic elements, which become closer, more intimate, more easily grasped, for this is the matter, the elemental force, born from the body itself. It transform cosmic terror into a gay carnival monster (335).

What Bakhtin insightfully suggests in these passages is that, by portraying anything in the process of bodily excretion, one is able to transform said thing into a more understandable, less terrifying version of itself, thus allowing the observer or reader to more willingly engage with, imagine, and accept it. More importantly, the inscription of leakiness onto things can also remove much of the socially constructed notions of hierarchy, nobility, and supremacy around them, allowing more intimacy between things and an easier way to recognize similarities between them.

This sentiment can be illustrated in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* as Panurge proposes to erect a wall from the genital organs of women:

I have observed that the pleasure-twats of women in this part of the world are much cheaper than stones. Therefore, the walls should be built of twats, symmetrically and according to the rules of architecture [...] what devil could possibly overthrow these walls; what metal on earth could stand up as well against punishment? ... What is more, no lightning could strike them. Why? Because they are consecrated (2, 15).

Bakhtin argues that, in addition to mocking the “cheapness of Paris women” (313), the grotesque bodily images in this passage serves to “uncrown and renew the fortified walls, as well as

military valor, bullets, and even lightning” (314). Indeed, the focus on the open, leaky areas of the female body is once again subversive as it disrupts the supposed nobility of war and military might. Using the notion of the leaky body, Rabelais seems to suggest that war and military valor is not necessarily as noble as presumed. The leaky body is therefore a subversive body, one that overthrows hierarchies and brings the unfathomable into the realm of understanding.

Milton’s Grotesque Cosmos

For Milton, the wildness of his nether cosmic spaces is certainly disclosed through the use of leaky imagery, suggesting the grotesque nature of Chaos and Hell and the necessity of these spaces to be maintained by his masculine God. In the first few books alone, Milton offers multiple images of Hell and Chaos that are closely associated with leakiness. For example, near the beginning of Book 1 Milton writes that Hell is surrounded with “a fiery deluge” (68), and “floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire” (77). In these instances, there is an association between chaotic elements of nature with images of rapidly moving water. Milton speaks of whirlwinds, tempests, and flames, emphasizing the untamed nature of Hell, and combines them with deluge and floods, both of which are images of rapid, unhinged fluidity, in order to highlight the wildness and incorrigibility of the cosmic space. Furthermore, both deluge and floods are unwanted forms of fluidity, they are dangerous and potentially life threatening. Thus Milton’s choice of watery language also suggests the grotesque and undesirable nature of Hell’s leakiness.

Milton, like Rabelais, also pays close attention to the excretory organs when presenting Hell and Chaos as leaky female bodies. For instance, Milton describes the legions of fallen angels rising from the lake of Hell as\

Like which the populous North
Poured never from her frozen loins, to pass
Rhene or the Danaw, when her barbarous sons
Came like a deluge on the South (1, 351 – 354).

Milton focuses on the reproductive organs in an act of birth that is almost like excretion as he further illustrates the wildness and grotesqueness of Hell's demons. The barbarous sons once again move like a deluge across space, and rather than being born in an orderly way, they pour, without restraint or guidance, out of their mother's "frozen," or infertile, loins. Once again, the barbarity, infertility, and the unrestrained movement of undesirable liquids serve to reveal the grotesque nature of Hell as well as its instability and danger. Another example of Milton's attention to bodily excretions comes in Book 2, where he discusses the rivers of Hell. He writes:

Of four infernal rivers that *disgorge*
Into the burning lake their baleful streams;
Abhorred Styx the flood of deadly hate (2, 575 – 577, my emphasis).

Here, Milton shifts his depiction to focus on the mouth in the process of disgorging food, and compares the way in which Hellish rivers drain into the lake of Hell as similar to oral excretions. Combined with another use of the word flood as well as adjectives such as abhorred and baleful, Milton reinforces the idea that Hell is grotesque and undesirable. A third example lies in Sin's opening of the gates of Hell. In this scene, Milton writes:

She opened, but to shut
Exceeded her power; the gates wide open stood, [...]
So wide they stood, and like a furnace mouth
Cast forth redounding smoke and ruddy flame (2, 883 – 889).

In this passage, Milton becomes more overt in suggesting not only the wildness and grotesque nature of the leaky space, but he also demonstrates the inability of the female bodies to control themselves. Although Sin, the guardian of Hell, who is unsurprisingly a female character, can open the gates of Hell and allow it leak out smoke and flame, she cannot actually close it up again. Furthermore, at the end of Book 2, Milton also reveals that after Satan leaves Hell, “Sin and Death amain/ following his track [...] paved after him a broad and beaten way” (1024 – 26), representing Hell as excreting horrible things such as Death and Sin. In this sense, Milton’s treatment of the leaky body almost mirrors what Paster suggests typical of early modern literature in seeing the “female body as a leaking vessel display that body as beyond the control of the female subject.” Using these passages, Milton is reinforcing the instability of the nether spaces through the use of the leaky body and suggesting that these feminine spaces are characterized by a wild incorrigibility and instability.

More importantly, Milton these wild spaces, due to their inability to manage themselves, need masculine energy to maintain. For example, Genesis in Book 7 is described as God silencing the abyss and forming the earth from it. Milton writes:

Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace

Said then th’ omnific Word, your discord end (7, 211 – 17).

In this passage, Milton brings together both the wildness and tumultuous nature of Chaos and God’s ability to bring calm. In other words, Milton presents a scene in which the clearly masculine God corrals and settles the feminized Chaos into obedience and peace. From this perspective, the purpose of Milton’s association of the leaky body to femininity seems to be to emphasize the necessity for God to manage and control Chaos, which is no different from what Davis or Paster argues is a typical attitude during Milton’s time.

However, despite the seemingly patriarchal and misogynist use of the leaky body in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's attitude towards the leaky body is actually much more complex. Firstly, Milton sees the leaky body as holding renewing, generative aspects, something close to a kind of excretory rebirth. Recalling Milton's passage on Hell's gold mines that has already been discussed in section one, the renewing capabilities of the body's leaky excretions becomes apparent. In this passage, Milton portrays the mine as a "womb," but also depicts this womb in the process of "belching fire and rolling smoke" (1, 671). This passage is an intriguing instance of Milton's description of leaky spaces in that, like Bakhtin suggests of Rabelais, Milton demonstrates the close connection between the mouth and the womb, suggesting that the intertwined nature of bodily excretions is both grotesque and renewing. Firstly, the use of belching is an illustration of the grotesque nature of this gold mine inside Hell. However, at the same time, as the gold is pulled out of this belching orifice, reminding the readers that these pieces of "metallic ore" are precisely the materials used to construct pandemonium. Therefore, this image also sees Milton's use of leakiness as a representation of rebirth or creation.

Another example of excretory rebirth can be found by returning to the scene where Satan and his demons all awake drenched in liquid flame inside Hell's lake. Firstly, Milton in Book 2 describes the lake as "the sleepy drench / of that forgetful lake [that] benumb not still" (73 – 73), implicitly demonstrating that the lake acts as a space where the past is forgotten and, like a dream, benumbed and wipe away after a short sleep. Of course, using the word drench, he also reminds us that it is a liquid and leaky space. Secondly, as demonstrated earlier in the section, the rivers of Hell drain into this lake, and as all the rivers have been represented as the bodily excretions of this space, Milton seems to suggest that Satan and the demons, in being "chained on the burning lake" (1, 210), are essentially being chained where all the excretions of Hell are

pooled together. They are drenched in the excretions of Hell. Yet, in the same way that Rabelais argues that, for instance, the wall of female genitalia serves to both renew and degrade military valor, being chained in the pool of excretion is also both Satan's (and all the demon's) moment of degradation and rebirth. Consider, for instance, Milton's portrayal of Satan's rise from the lake of Hell:

On each hand the flames
Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires, and rolled
In billows [...] Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air
That felt unusual weight, till on dry land
He lights (1, 221 – 229).

Satan's rise is depicted as quite glorious and suggests his renewed vigor. Milton emphasizes his "mighty stature" and his "expanded wings," revealing the grandiosity and power that Satan still holds even in his fallen condition. Moreover, Milton then points our attention to the way that the flames, represented as the bodily excretions, are driven backwards and roll off of his arms in billows. This vivid moment in which Satan sheds off the excretions that cover him almost suggest to us that the excretions that cover him in the lake are things of the past. They are representations of his former self in Heaven, and that they are now disposed of and, for lack of better word, excreted out of him. From this perspective, it seems no surprise that after this moment of rebirth, Satan follows up with one of his most iconic speeches in which he accepts his transformation and acknowledges himself as the new ruler of Hell:

Hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell

Receive thy new possessor

[...] Here we may reign secure (1, 242 – 263).

As the past is excreted out of Satan, he is reborn with a new, leaky, body, a new grotesque mentality, and as the new king, new possessor of Hell. The excretory lake of Hell also becomes a womb, and Hell becomes the grotesque mother, in which Satan can be reborn and renewed in purpose and mindset.

Just as Satan excretes his heavenliness to embrace Hell, Milton also demonstrates that this process allows Heaven to excrete Satan and his demons as well. In fact, Milton uses similar images of leakiness in order to demonstrate the way Heaven expels the demons. On the third day of battle, the Son defeats Satan and the demons, and as they are driven back towards the gates of Hell, Milton writes that the

Crystal wall of Heav'n, which op'ning wide,

Rolled inward, and a spacious gap disclosed

Into the wasteful deep (6, 860 – 63).

Compare this depiction of Heaven's opening to the way Hell's gate opens as mentioned above: "the gates wide open stood [...] like a furnace mouth / Cast forth redounding smoke and ruddy flame" (2, 884 – 89). In both instances, Milton focuses on the wideness of the gate, and by suggesting that Heaven is opening into the "wasteful deep," he further draws parallels between the way Heaven excretes Satan and his demons and the way Hell belches smoke and fire, and eventually leaks out Sin and Death. Furthermore, in the scene where Chaos describes the events it witnesses to Satan, it claims that "Heav'n's gates / Poured out by millions her victorious bands / Pursuing" (996 – 98), which is also exceptionally reminiscent of the various images of pouring and disgorging that is so often used to describe Hell. In this sense, the gates of Heaven and Hell

both become spatial representations of the open orifice of the leaky body, and Heaven's excretion of the fallen angels marks the birth of the Son as the true Messiah. After the removal of Satan and the fallen angels, Milton writes:

Sole Victor from th' expulsion of his foes
Messiah his triumphal chariot turned:
To meet him all his saints, who silent stood
Eye witnesses of his almighty acts [...]
And his sung victorious King (6, 880 – 86).

The passage, seen from the perspective of rebirth, seems to again mirror the moment of Satan's rebirth as Hell's king. As Satan stands with his mighty stature over Hell and declares his reign, the Son returns with all eyes upon him, triumphant and recognized by all as the true King of Heaven. Thus, using the open orifices of the spatial bodies, Milton demonstrates that the process of excretion is anything but grotesque, for it is a moment of renewal and rebirth for Heaven, Hell, the Son, and Satan.

In fact, the renewing and generative nature of the leaky body is applied to the relationship between Heaven and Earth as well, but in less gendered terms. This idea can be demonstrated by exploring the linkage between Heaven and Earth. Milton at the end of Book 2 reveals that earth is "Hung o' ver [Chaos's] realm, linked in a golden chain / To that side Heav'n from whence [Satan's] legions fell (1005 – 6). Later, Milton offers this description again as he writes:

And fast by hanging in a golden chain
This pendent world, in bigness as a star
Of smallest magnitude close by the moon (1051 – 53).

With these two instances, what is important to note is the use of the word “pendent” in describing earth. The *OED* shows that this word has always held the meaning of “having branches that hang or droop down.” Considering the image of the Earth drooping down from Heaven, it also seems as if Milton is offering an image of an Earth that is dripping, or leaking, out of Heaven into its own space. Of course, this idea is not to be taken literally as Milton demonstrates God creating this world in Book 7. However, as we consider this concept metaphorically, we can understand why Earth is, in some ways, the child of Heaven. Both spaces are meant to house God’s obedient and loyal creations, but Earth’s inhabitants will not be as powerful, suggesting that Earth is in fact a weaker model of Heaven. With this word, then, Milton suggests metaphorically that Earth is essentially an extension of Heaven. In other words, Earth has leaked out of Heaven. The existence of the chain, therefore, suggests that Earth is still young, “of smallest magnitude,” and has not fully detached, fully leaked out, from Heaven due to its immaturity. Consequently, Milton’s use of the leaky body is quite complicated; although he demonstrates the instability and grotesqueness of female bodies through this concept, he also considers the renewing and generative elements of it and applies it to his Hell and Heaven, even if in these instances the gendering of his leaky bodies are often quite inconsistent.

Secondly, Milton also sees the leaky body as deterritorializing. It is perhaps quite apt that Bakhtin mentions “cosmic elements” in his discussion of the subversive nature of bodily excretions as Milton also uses this aspect of the leaky body to draw parallels between heavenly and hellish spaces as well as angelic and human bodies in order to create more intimacy between them and remind the readers of their similarities as opposed to their differences. Consider further, for instance, the parallel Milton draws between Heaven and Hell in their excretory acts. Not only does Milton use this moment to illustrate a form of rebirth, Milton also suggests that

both Heaven and Hell have similar bodily functions. Both must excrete through their open orifices, and both acts as wombs in various ways to give birth to spaces and characters. What this suggests is that for Milton, the leakiness of Heaven is a disruption of its purity and transcendence. At the same time, the parallels between Heaven and Hell are ways to purge Hell from its negative associations. Thus, Milton inscribes aspects of the leaky body onto these cosmic spaces to remind us that there are actually very little essential differences between the material conditions, or the bodies, of Heaven and Hell, and that the differences ultimate lie in the way these spaces are inhabited. As Bakhtin would say, Milton makes, through the inscription of the leaky body, his cosmic spaces more intimate with one another. Furthermore, by joining Earth in the golden chain, Milton also suggest that Hell and Heaven are made up of the same materials as Earth as well, demonstrating that his cosmic spaces in the epic are all made of the same cosmic materials and belong in the same immanent realm as one another.

The existence of this immanent cosmos can be further supported by the way Milton defines death as a matter of transitioning between physical spaces as opposed to spiritual spaces. Near the end of the Book 2, Milton depicts the emergence of death in humanity as a result of the personified character Death simply walking from Hell to Earth:

Soon after when man fell,
Strange alteration! Sin and Death amain
Following his track, such was the will of Heav'n
Paved after [Satan] a broad and beaten way
Over the dark abyss (2, 1023 – 27).

Note how Milton uses the language of roads and road-building to describe death's appearance on earth. Death follows Satan's track, which is "paved" after Satan has made the same journey.

Milton suggests that the dark abyss that separates Hell and Earth is simply an unexplored territory, a path to be paved and tread upon. Thus, the epic furthers the intimacy of its multiverse by demonstrating that there are no real transcendental beings and that the reason Hell, Heaven, or death seem detached from the material realm is because the pathway to them has not been paved or recognized. Another example of death as a physical transition between spaces can be found in Adam and Eve's disobedience. After eating the apple, Adam and Eve simply "took their solitary way" (12, 649) from one space, Eden, to another space, outside of it, even though their transgression which is supposed to be punished with death. Therefore, using the concept of the leaky body, Milton asks the readers to consider the material similarities between Heaven, Hell and Earth in addition to their differences. Additionally, by linking the cosmic spaces to various characters such as Sin, Eve, and Death, Milton also includes human bodies, perhaps also angelic bodies, in his deterritorialized and immanent cosmos³.

Finally, deterritorialization also allows the epic to reject the concept that women are necessarily connected to the cold and wet humors. For instance, in Book 2, as Satan first takes flight out of Hell, Milton describes Chaos:

For Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry, four champions fierce
Strive here for mast'ry, and to battle bring
Their embryon atoms (898 – 900).

Additionally, Milton later writes that Chaos is

The womb of Nature and perhaps her grave,
Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
But all these in their pregnant causes mixed

³ I use the word immanent and deterritorialized in the same way that Deleuze and Guattari define them in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Confus'dly, and which thus must ever fight (911 – 914).

Chaos is complicated because although Milton portrays her as a culturally feminine space, he reveals here that the four humors all battle in Chaos, and that none of them seem to dominate the other, which means Milton's epic also does not necessarily accept the idea that the female body is associated with the cold and wet humors. Chaos can have all four humors battling within her at once, with none being the victor, but still be a womb and a mother space. Thus, Milton's epic seems to reject the idea of one-sexed body of Galenic humoralism that physicians such as Helkiah Croke seem to accept. In this sense, Milton's rejection of humoralism serves to further deterritorialize his cosmic spaces.

In this section, engaging with the various ways in which the leaky female body is formulated historically, Milton's *Paradise Lost* views the female body as grotesque but also as a source for rebirth and subversion, ultimately suggesting that the epic utilizes the subversive and generative aspects of the leaky body concept to present an immanent cosmos.

Conclusion: A Deterritorialized Multiverse?

Paradise Lost presents a complicated and often inconsistent attempt to appropriate the language of reproduction and the female body in order to gender Chaos and the multiverse. Focusing on the female womb, and the culturally generated characteristics of the female body such as leakiness and double-formedness, Milton depicts a deterritorialized, grotesque cosmos where the boundaries and distinctions between Heavenly and Hellish spaces and bodies are muddled and intertwined. Inside this grotesque multiverse, Chaos becomes a kind of feminine Goddess who gives birth to the universes alongside God and the various cosmic spaces and bodies take on a more mutable nature unbounded by the strict laws of the body.

Yet Milton also seems to affirm some hierarchies between masculinity and femininity that are prevalent during his time by suggesting that the masculine aspects of his cosmos (i.e. God) are sometimes more significant than their feminine counterparts (i.e. Chaos). Furthermore, the epic also seems to accept the cultural characteristics that demonize the female body by presenting it as monstrous, feeble, and incorrigible in addition to acknowledging its subversive, generative and transformative nature.

The first section of this thesis investigates the ways Milton discusses genesis by appropriating the language of reproduction and the female womb in his time to feminize Chaos as a space and elevate its generative power, transforming Chaos into a kind of mother space where the cosmos is born. *Paradise Lost* presents mother Chaos as both eternally sublime and containing vast, if not infinite, generative potential. Additionally, in making Chaos into a cosmic mother, Milton enters her into a reproductive relationship with God, thus limiting God's generative powers by allowing him to take on the reproductive role of the father. However, the epic also illustrates that God's role as the father or shaper of the universe is greater, and more

important, than the role of Chaos as the mother. However, engaging with the misogynistic discussions of the time that see the womb as a birthplace of sin and as entirely dependent on external influence, the epic also seems to re-affirm certain historical views of gender hierarchy. Milton's genesis from the perspective of human reproduction suggests the conflicting, even contradictory attitude the epic holds towards its gendered cosmic spaces.

The idea of female double-formedness in Milton's epic is the central focus of the second section. Using the idea of Sin as a double-formed woman of Hell, the epic presents Hell's gatekeeper as a microcosmic representation of both the monstrous and mutable aspects of the multiverse. Sin and Chaos are both double-formed in that they represent persons and feminine spaces, and their existence are paralleled in the epic to suggest both satanic corruption and a form of transitivity, a necessary transitional link between spaces in the epic. This section also demonstrates this same double-formedness in non-gendered, colonialist terms through Milton's Hell. Double-formedness, demonstrated by Sin, Chaos, and Hell, reveal that Milton's multiverse is characterized by spatial and temporal hybridity and mutability, and that the boundaries between spaces are not something to be upheld, but something to be transgressed. This section therefore suggests that the conflicting attitudes the epic holds towards gendered cosmic bodies is in fact a signifier of this spatial mutability.

In the third and final section, this thesis considers the historical representations of the leaky female body and applies it to Milton's epic. Engaging closely with the theories of Bakhtin and Paster, this section illustrates that Milton appropriates the concept of the leaky body in order to associate his "nether" spaces with a kind of wildness and incorrigibility, thus reinforcing their need for masculine dominance in the form of God. Yet, at the same time, the epic also considers the subversive powers of the leaky body's fluidity and ability to produce excretions, and uses

these aspects of it to deterritorialize the hierarchical distinctions between Heavenly and Hellish spaces as well as between Angelic and human bodies. Similar to section two, this final part of the thesis further demonstrates the fluidity between the boundaries of spaces and bodies in Milton's multiverse.

Through the close analyses of the individual sections, this thesis allows for further considerations into Milton's complicated cosmology. For instance, how is God separated from the material existence of the cosmos in this deterritorialized multiverse? This project also opens ways for us to take on an eco-feminist perspective and examine the connection between spatial resource extraction (via mining, exploring new lands, and re-interpreting space) and the reproductive nature of the female body in Milton's epic. Additionally, the project also allows for further consideration into the relationship between excretions, the leaky body, and colonization. For instance, can the colonies be also seen as the bodily excretions of the metropole? In the end, by delving into the seemingly inconsistent, conflicting ways in which the cosmic spaces of *Paradise Lost* are gendered as well as examining Milton's complicated treatment of gendered bodies, this project illustrates that the very evidence of inconsistency and contradiction is the epic's way to assert its spatially mutable and gender-fluid cosmos, making the multiverse "grotesque" from the first.

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