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” . . . At the Ear of Eve”: Hearing,
Gender, and the Physiology of the Fall in
John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*

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“ . . . AT THE EAR OF EVE”: HEARING, GENDER, AND THE PHYSIOLOGY OF
THE FALL IN JOHN MILTON’S *PARADISE LOST*

by

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ABSTRACT

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The organ of hearing, in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, is inextricably connected with both the physical and the spiritual; it is the point of entry through which Satan's words enter Eve's brain, subsequently process, and lead eventually to the fall of mankind. Its symbolic importance is also indisputable, as it is a metaphor for the feminine passivity and penetrability that make Milton's Eve a particularly vulnerable target. There is, however, already a pre-existing connection between the ear and its role in *Paradise Lost*. The seventeenth-century medical texts of Milton's contemporaries gender the physiology of the ear and the process of hearing and therefore contribute to its importance in the pivotal temptation scene; that is, the rhetoric surrounding the physiology of the ear is the downfall of humankind in the epic poem. As a result of the dangerous connection between science and language, Milton's characters are already predestined to sin.

To Mom, obviously, and to Michael Harrawood

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Introduction

Book IV of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* opens *in medias res*. In the first few pages, the angels Ithuriel and Zephon, at the Archangel Gabriel's bidding, search Paradise only to find the toad-bodied Satan "squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve" (IV 800). Lines prior, Gabriel had expressed his hope that the two "fair creatures," these humans of Eden, are "laid perhaps asleep secure of harm." However, as it turns out, the angel's fear is not unfounded, and the slumbering pair are actually in a rather precarious situation: actually, Satan exploits this scenario quite sneakily, as he,

Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,
[Assays] by his devilish art to reach
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge
Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams[.]
(*Paradise Lost* 4.800-803)

Here, the word "art," strategically placed, implies a fantastic, imaginative tactic; Satan is using methods heretofore unwitnessed in Paradise, for what use would Eden have for forgery, for imitation? Imagery is the "devilish art," and Satan's motive is to reach "the organs of her fancy" – an important anatomical reference – and "with" these "forge illusions" to reach his end. (Consider here also the word "forgery" as an imitation, and the fact that it is unclear whether "with" means simply "within" or actually "with the aid of;" the ambiguity is worth noting.) However, in order to succeed in bringing about the temptation scene, Satan is dependent upon these "organs of fancy" that Milton describes in the poem with the terms that he knows from the work of his contemporary scholars,

especially physicians and anatomists. It is as though anatomy provides both the basis and the raw material with (and within) which Satan may work to “forge illusions.” Eve, as I will later discuss, is condemned to fall because of her anatomy, and even more so by Milton’s linguistic treatment of her body.

Physically, though, it is also slumber that provides the background to the fall of mankind from grace. In their sleep state, Adam and (especially) Eve are at the riskiest place in the entire poem, and the previously fallen Satan realizes and takes advantage of their vulnerable state to induce the foreshadowing dream in Eve. He assumes the shape of one of the naturally occurring creatures in Paradise, leans in close to Eve, and takes the first metaphorical step toward forever changing the human condition. However, conditions for the temptation of humanity are already optimal – there are several physiological factors that make sure that Satan gets his way. The body is written in a way that ends up being explicitly helpful to Satan in *Paradise Lost*; that is, Milton describes the body’s internal processes in terms of metaphors that directly reflect what he assumed their function to be (such as, again, the “organs of fancy”). That is, even as Milton writes the humans of his epic in their unfallen state, he is constrained by seventeenth-century medicine and knowledge, and thus the predisposition to certain types of physiological description with which he writes his epic naturally puts his subject, the human body, at special risk. Consider the “organs of fancy” that Milton describes in the very passage quoted above. Without them, Satan is powerless to do anything, since it is the way that Milton describes their function that allows Satan to use them to his advantage. The body, then, connects the pair to an inevitable fall from grace. The risk, furthermore, is especially acute for Eve, whose femininity, established as absorbent and

receptive all throughout the poem, makes her “organs of fancy” particularly vulnerable for invasion and susceptible to the kind of “forgery” for which Satan will use them.

The third key physical factor at play is sleep and the unfortunate conditions it entails: as the two humans slumber, they experience a loss of consciousness and also of the all-important capacity for reason. This is risky because when humans sleep, according to the scholarship of Milton’s contemporaries, reason is not the governing force in their minds, and without reason, the human mind cannot make reasonable decisions. And reason is important in the function of the relationship of these two Edenites: Adam and Eve, through their duality and interdependent function, Adam and Eve, as Milton establishes, embody the delicate balance between reason and imagination as a necessary pair that composes humanity as whole yet places it in two different bodies. That is, Adam is the more reasonable party, while Eve is the more imaginative. Although each of them possesses both reason and imagination, the two humans act as distinct symbols of these faculties, with Adam as reason’s embodiment, the decisive, active force, and Eve as the empirical imagination. However, when they both are asleep, they, as the collective humanity, are technically at a loss for reason, which, as I will later discuss, is the decidedly masculine side of the reason/imagination duality. Because reason lies indisposed, basically any sensory data that enters the mind isn’t subject to the same full judgment of reason that would occur if they were awake. Therefore, as the two are asleep, reason sleeps, and imagination lies awake, and all mental processes (dreams and the like) that occur in this state are in effect unreasonable. Satan is able to whisper into Eve’s ear without either the involvement of Adam, the more reasonable one of the two, or the interference of her own natural capacity for reason. With “reason” incapacitated and

Adam, her counterpart, also asleep, the mind's policeman is twice out of commission; Satan is then able to appeal actively to the other side of humanity's consciousness without much fear of failure.

The other, interconnected risk factor at play in the sleeping sequence in Book IV is Eve's femininity. Since the pair exists in two distinct bodies, and since of the two, she is, according to Milton, fundamentally the less reasonable one, that separation puts the already defenseless Eve at special risk. Basically, the seventeenth-century knowledge of the functions of the mind and physiology constrains Eve to the weaknesses of the body in general and of her gender in specific terms. Her body, as I will later discuss in detail, already has the decidedly female tendency to passively absorb matter – sounds, ideas, etc – internalize it, and process it into something else, in an action that essentially mimics conception and pregnancy. This capacity for bodily processing and experiencing is not always a terrible thing; Desiree Hellegers writes of Eve as “Milton's epistemological ideal” because she takes the form of “embodied practice” instead of Adam's “theoretical and speculative knowledge” (Hellegers 119). Hellegers's analysis is a twist on the idea of Adam and Eve as the human embodiments of authority and experience. Eve's physiological differences make her “epistemological;” Eve, being the empirical complement to Adam's authority-driven “reason,” by virtue of sheer difference compulsively seeks experience.

The implications about the nature of Eve's womanhood in seventeenth-century literature are many. Most of the medical scholarship that existed at Milton's time indicated precisely the female body's susceptibility to invasion, as well as its inclination to accept foreign particles and to convert and develop them into something else. Eve's

sleep, combined with her womanhood, puts the fate of humanity at special risk at this point. Even seventeenth-century medical texts, like Lemnius Levinus' *The Secret Miracles of Nature*, agree that the female body is at specific risk because of its overall less powerful capacity for reason, "for a woman's mind is not so strong as a man's, nor is she so full of understanding and reason and judgment" (Levinus 274).

Perhaps most important when considering the physiological factors that led up to the Fall is the fact that it is specifically Eve's ear that is left exposed when she is asleep by Adam's side. The ear is one of the places in the human body that fascinates the seventeenth-century medic with its intricacy; it is the subject of much description and detailed speculation about the function of its various parts. It is the place where the outside world gains access the inside; furthermore, however, it has a special connection with the brain, as it is the only sensory organ endowed with what is basically a direct passageway into the mind. It allows the entry of information (in the form of sound carried through the air). Thereafter, the reasonable capacity of the human mind filters it and judges its importance. The information enters the ear, and the brain decides what to do with it – the ear's physical shape and location therefore make it physiologically crucial particularly in human rationality and therefore relate it directly to the rational/empirical duality that Adam and Eve represent.

Additionally, the purpose of the organ of hearing demands a male-female exchange between the air (and with it also the information it carries, including language) and the ear to take place. In the duration of this process, the air essentially enters the ear, which acts as the gateway to the mind. If the subject is asleep, as Eve happens to be in the middle of Book IV, then, since there is no reason to discriminate "good" data from

“bad,” Satan’s badly intended (and essentially phallic) words may freely enter the brain and begin to process. The ear’s function and shape (that is, its physiology), then, combined with Eve’s sleep and femaleness, make the dream scene in Book IV the absolute riskiest moment in the whole epic. All of these factors come to a head in this scene and essentially lead to the fall of mankind.

Reason and Fancy: Duality, gender, and how they set up the stage for humanity's fall from grace.

Milton's focus on the ear in the events leading up to the Fall of Man provides a strong physiological example of the importance of gender in *Paradise Lost* in that it echoes the masculine and feminine rhetoric in the medical research and writing of his contemporaries. The consequence of his scholarly context is that Milton genders the process of hearing through the associations that he makes between the ear and femininity. Whatever the locus of Satan's influence (in this case, the ear), however, and beyond whenever his chosen time of attack occurs (i.e. when the pair lies sleeping), the evidence points to the Miltonic fall having its roots in the body and in gender. The duality – that is, the fact that Adam and Eve exist as separate and disparate – demands an acknowledgement of difference: the existence of two people, both perfectly lovely examples of “humanity,” demands an explanation for the fall that takes the both of them equally into account. Milton believed, after all, in the completeness of human beings in and of themselves; R. A. Shoaf cites Milton as believing that “man is a living being, intrinsically and properly one and individual. He is not double or separable” (Shoaf 3). Although Adam is perfect because he is one of God's creations, he is still lonely, and this loneliness demands the subsequent creation of Eve, who is also complete in her own way. However, their interdependence assures that the fall is ultimately the responsibility of both, and it is therefore safe to say that humanity might never have fallen if there were not two separate, distinct, equally culpable people in Paradise. And, among dualities and dichotomies, the process of hearing in *Paradise Lost*, too, is gendered, and the gender separation is another one of the two-part harmonies that arise from a fundamental system

of dualities that exists, because of God, in Eden. In order to understand the full extent of the effects of gender and hearing on the actual loss of Paradise, then, it is necessary to examine what these differences are, how they came to be, and how exactly they are related.

It is true that Eden's first human resident, Adam, is initially alone; however, he also senses his own incompleteness, since "man's tragedy is to be one without ever being whole" (Shoaf 4). God creates Adam in his own image; therefore, since Adam is essentially a metaphor for God, he is created as a result of God's actions and as a comparison to the original. Since he is not a direct replica of the divine being, then, he is not singular and complete, and he finds something lacking in himself and his existence. Adam then notes to God that all the beasts have been equipped with a companion of their own kind. He also cleverly mentions that animals "well converse" with their own, but not as well with others, and cites this linguistic discrepancy as one of the sources of his own dissatisfaction (Milton 8.396). He speaks, in other words, but has nobody similar enough to his own person to bring conversational satisfaction. God answers by saying that he himself is also alone; Adam, endowed with the uniquely human capacity for reason, responds smartly. "Thou in thyself art perfect," he tells God, "and in thee / is no deficiency found; not so is man" (Milton 8.415-16). The difference in word choice is perhaps the difference between God's state of being and Adam's: God is "alone" (etymologically stemming from a combination of "all" and "one") and Adam is presumably "lonely" (a combination of "lone" and the suffix "-ly," that is, *like or in the image of alone*).

So, naturally though humbly, Adam tells God he cannot “in [the beasts’] ways complacence find” (VIII 360). God, acting as the “Author” (a concept on which Adam, perhaps unconsciously, later in the poem bases his “authority” over Eve), proclaims in response that he always knew “it not good for man to be alone” (Milton 8.360, 445). God then proceeds to tell Adam of the companion he will bring: “thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self” – another human, another self for Adam to converse and coexist with to make sure that loneliness does not plague him (Milton 8.450). Here, again, the importance of the “other self,” the image, the likeness, is evident: Adam doesn’t consider the animals fit company; he needs another being that he can relate to, another like him but not exactly the same. Furthermore, “other self” denotes a belonging, a connection, and a singularity between the two beings that will soon cohabit Paradise. They are to be one “self” in two bodies; therefore, although Adam is perhaps a perfectly created being, his humanity is incomplete without the presence of Eve.

R. A. Shoaf’s definition of “one” and “two” as “monad” and “dual” (from *Milton, Poet of Duality*) applies the number system to support Adam’s loneliness and his need for another human being in Paradise. God, he points out, is “singular, repeatable but not (re)iterable, principle of difference and of generation,” whereas humanity (as the “one and one” that make “two”) is “mating, whole,” and the “principle of human creativity, [the] structure of the psyche and of language” (Shoaf xxiii). Adam and Eve are not, in fact, a “double” or a repetition of each other, like Satan and his daughter Sin; they are both entire beings and mutually dependent halves that comprise the whole of humanity. And, from the point where God first creates Eve, although she is just as whole as Adam, they are invariably linked; the actions of one move the other. Eve picks the apple

because although she and Adam have come to exist as two distinct, separate people in Paradise. Neither of them is perfect, because, although both are entire human beings, neither is complete – the Miltonic “whole,” after all, does not mean singularity, it simply signifies “parts in harmony” (Shoaf xxiii). As in the case of Adam and Eve, “wholeness, duality, will sometimes [...] insist on separateness and division and difference; but sometimes, unlike dualism, it will insist on likeness and union and and participation,” also not unlike in the relationship between Adam and Eve (Shoaf 4). They are connected, though discrete, and interdependent though dwelling in two separate bodies. Satan’s involvement in Book IV is a catalyst for a domino effect dependent on the interrelated functions of the duality that both separates and connects Adam and Eve. He sees Eve’s ability to act on her own, as her own person, but he also sees Adam’s dependence on Eve; therefore, he merely sets the chain of events in motion by recognizing that he can tempt all of humanity without necessarily tempting the “Reasonable” qualities in Adam. (On a related note, the fact that Adam senses his own imperfection is also an example of an aporia in Paradise and a flaw in either the narrative or in God’s design. Adam senses a lack of something he cannot possibly empirically imagine. Even the circumstances preceding Eve’s creation, then, bring up questions against God’s perfect Paradise, and open a window of opportunity for Satan to be able to call on Eve to question her own place.)

Jean Hagstrum, in his 1980 book *Sex and Sensibility*, appears to find the relationship between Adam and Eve rather different from Shoaf’s hierarchical, dualistic discussion. Hagstrum asserts the reverse of the reason/imagination argument that Milton attempts tacitly to imply. He argues, in other words, against the assumption that Adam

and Eve exist in a power system in which Adam is the primary and Eve the secondary. Instead, Hagstrum claims that Eve “finds her happiness even greater than Adam’s, since her consort is superior to his” and how Adam “exalts his wife’s loveliness to an absolute value and endows her with a self-completeness, an awe, an authority, and a reason that should belong to God alone” (Hagstrum 37). In this passage, Hagstrum finds another reason for Satan’s temptation of Eve and not Adam; it is Eve’s odd completeness that makes her even more Godlike than Adam. Hagstrum also writes that it is woman who “‘inspires’ [Adam] to take and eat” (a biblical reference) with her charm and self-sufficiency (Hagstrum 38). The inclusion of the words “authority” and “reason” make this analysis particularly striking, as otherwise, in the superficial analysis of the relationship between Adam and Eve (no matter how equal), those specific qualities would be relegated to the former. This analysis finds something whole in Eve, something that Adam does not possess; perhaps this is a part of the gender differentiation between the two, and partly due to the physiological difference.

Hagstrum’s analysis still reflects an understanding of the hierarchical dynamic that drives the poem, although he acknowledges that the relationship between the two genders in *Paradise Lost* is not one of traditional hierarchy as we imagine it. Instead, “woman is below man as a first mate is below a captain, as a prime minister is below a king, but she is not a slave or a victim. As a joyful partner, she is free to dream and in her dreams to embroider and sophisticate her pleasures” (Hagstrum 38). Even after Eve falls, she “quickly regains dignity and place” because of her self-sufficiency; however, because of the heartbreakingly profound interdependency between the two, Adam subsequently also eats of the significant apple. Eve is not as Milton sometimes appears to

make her out to be. She is not wholly dependent on Adam; instead, the two share the power in Eden because of the difference that exists between them – and this is the very co-authorship that Shoaf refers to in his analysis about Milton’s awareness of duality. That is, although Hagstrum makes a different point that appears to differ from that of Milton and Shoaf, his interpretation still invokes a sense of the difference between the genders. In *Paradise Lost*, however, there is indeed a difference that exists despite the simultaneous “mutuality and hierarchy” already present in the Edenic relationship (Hagstrum 38). The difference is necessary but damning, as it is precisely gender that is the determining factor in Satan’s involvement.

Hagstrum agrees, however, that Eve’s dream is a “dramatic foreshadowing” and that because Eve is “beautiful, sensuous, poetic, open to imaginative stimulation, she is peculiarly susceptible to a corruption of her fancy” (Hagstrum 39). Although Milton never explicitly connects the toad’s words and Eve’s dream, the poem still implies that Satan plants the seeds of the dream “in her aroused and receptive mind,” particularly female in its absorptive way (Hagstrum 39). However, he asserts that the aftermath of the dream brings into light that the difference between the two is too great and Adam’s response is “too intellectual and general by far” (Hagstrum 40). That is, although they are both reasonable creatures, Adam’s logic and simplicity in this situation are too far-fetched to adequately interpret Eve’s dream-time experience. However, the lovely part of the difference between the two that results in their interdependency is, for Hagstrum, the fact that although Eve eats the sinful fruit, Adam also consumes a part of the fruit because “Eve was the loving, imaginative, poetic being that Adam [...] loved” (Hagstrum 41). Although Hagstrum’s definition of Eve here is kind of fantastic, it is still clear that

Eve is something fascinating and mysterious to Adam. She has a strange capacity, specifically because of her femininity, to internalize things in a way that Adam cannot; therefore, in a conclusion that agrees with both Hagstrum and Shoaf, it is safe to say that both the body and the dream are given a certain gender specificity within the context of *Paradise Lost*.

Shoaf, like Hagstrum, also clarifies a distinction between hierarchy and superiority within the Edenic “whole,” which Adam echoes when he verbally confirms his superiority, at least if the “reason” and “fancy” in his rhetoric are metaphors for the man and woman of Paradise. Adam makes the distinction when he tells Eve, in Book V, that “in the soul / Are many lesser faculties that serve / Reason as chief; among these fancy next / Her office holds” (Milton 5.100-104). The personifications indicate a certain sexism: for instance, here, “reason” is masculine, which, in a Paradise that only boasts one man and one woman, is therefore directly relevant to Adam himself. “Fancy,” second to Reason, is feminine, holding her “office” directly beneath that of the logical man. Even if Adam does not mean for this statement to be taken as an analogy to the role that he himself imagines between the two sexes, his gendered rhetoric is still proof of the superior/inferior roles that he believes his masculinity and her femininity to carry. He continues to explain away Eve’s dream by further referring to the fallible, untrustworthy nature of fancy, a thoroughly unreasonable governing force, and by gendering the concept itself; apparently, Fancy

[...] forms imaginations, aery shapes,

Which [the other party,] Reason, joining or disjoining, frames

All what we affirm or what deny, and call

Our knowledge or opinion; then retires
Into [Fancy's] private cell, when nature rests.
Oft in [nature's] absence mimick Fancy wakes
To imitate her; but, misjoining shapes
Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams[.]

(Paradise Lost 5.105-112)

Adam's proclamation carries within it the implication of the hierarchy of the whole that Shoaf makes in his book. This claim is troublesome, though, when arguing the human completeness of both Adam and Eve. Adam is perhaps mistaken in his assumption of the existence of the hierarchy and of his superiority, and thereby ignores the inherent equality (or at least equivalence and inter-dependency) in the division of qualities between them. Additionally, this citation associates Fancy, and the feminine, with mimicry and imitation, which imbues it with a whole new level of misogyny related to the idea of man as "original" and woman as "copy" or "imitation;" however, this is another point to argue altogether.

It is possible that Adam is flawed in his assumption of superiority, and that this assumption is precisely what causes the flaw in the duality that comprises humanity. The two are essentially equal. However, the fact that Adam believes himself, and therefore Reason, to be superior to Eve and Imagination, means that he doesn't account for the importance of Eve's dream, for instance. In this way, Shoaf's distinction of the implicit hierarchy and subordination in a "whole" is inappropriate; this is because while it is true that Adam and Eve are symbols of "Reason" and "Fancy," neither is subordinate to the other. Reason governs over Fancy not as a supreme authority but with a system of

checks and balances, and therefore, the most dangerous moment in Eden comes while Reason sleeps (both in the way that the authoritative Adam as well as Eve's inevitably present logic and capacity for linear thinking are incapacitated when the pair are in repose). The fact is that Fancy lies awake, and is, for the moment, the stronger of the two. The reasonable, God-trusting, authoritarian logic of Adam has given way to the internalization, experience, and empiricism of Eve: with both the logic of Adam and of the waking state out of the way, the characterized feminine quality of Fancy, or imagination, is, again, susceptible to Satan's words. Although Adam, presumptuous in his authority, may claim otherwise, in the reality of the events that unfold in Paradise, there is no better/worse differentiation in gender; the fall is instead merely a product of the implications of duality and difference. So, instead of one entity responsible for both "reason" and "fancy," these qualities are divided between two people – and without "reason" to block the invasive force of words from entering the ear and thereafter gestating in the brain, "fancy" is basically unprotected. The two are inextricably connected.

Furthermore, because of this connection based on difference, Satan realizes that of the two denizens of Paradise, it is Eve who possesses the bodily characteristics that make her particularly vulnerable. This is why he makes his attack while they are both at their weakest: Eve herself proclaims the momentary attractiveness of the Tree of Knowledge in her retelling of the dream. "Fair it seemed," she describes, "Much fairer to my fancy than by day;" this "fairness" is particularly attractive here because she is sleeping and logic and reason aren't present to warn her against the prospect. (Curious also is the dual meaning of "fair" – meaning both "beautiful" and "just" – as though the

events of the dream seem, without the guidance of Reason, to be both. This double definition appears to be a sort of justification for the deed in the dream, as well as another reflection of the poem's overarching themes of duality as pointed out by scholars like Shoaf.)

Shoaf points out also that the “-in” in “sin” is perhaps not accidental; it also functions as a “feminine” syllable at the end of every word to which it becomes attached, however accidental or deliberate this may be in *Paradise Lost*:

“The association of the feminine with the fallen (with becoming, process, liability, etc.) is, of course, an ingrained trope of Western misogyny[.] [A]t the same time, it does seem important to me, given Milton's complex attitude toward "this sex which is not one," to insist on this characteristic of the suffix –en in the context of the syllable of sin” (Shoaf xv).

If Shoaf is correct, then Milton's use of the word “sin” is strategic, and this trope affixes a feminine culpability into its every mention (it isn't easy to forget the shortcomings of the female character bearing the same name, after all). In addition to this, and even beyond it, however, there is a strong thread of male-female relationships in the epic. Even if Milton does not mean for this connection to occur, it does, since there is already a linguistically predetermined connection between woman and sin. We have already established the need for duality in the poem; the presence, specifically, of the duality based in gender sets the stage for the strategic importance of hearing, since, as a process in the Miltonic world and otherwise, it relies on a certain male-female rhetoric to function at all. Thanks to the dualistic premise of the poem, throughout all of *Paradise Lost*, Milton establishes hearing as a gendered process in which the listener is inextricably

connected with femaleness and passivity, and the act of speaking, “the Word,” is inevitably male; Milton establishes this with a series of textual clues.

The problem of gender: How Miltonic language feminizes hearing and the listening process in *Paradise Lost*

Is hearing really gendered in *Paradise Lost*, or is it simply a question of Eve's femininity that makes her also process thoughts and dreams differently? Within the epic poem, there are numerous instances in which the act of hearing and listening places the listener into a role of passivity and of receptiveness and awakens certain mental functions that also mirror those discussed in seventeenth-century scholarship. In particular these instances are reminiscent of Helkiah Crooke's description of the connection between hearing and thinking in *Mikrokosmographia*. In Crooke's tome, these mental processes seem to be inherently feminine in the way that they work, even seeming sometimes tacitly to render the ear canal to be the entryway into something womblike. That is, the mind, with its mysterious potential to create something out of nothing, is not in seventeenth-century medicine unlike the feminine reproductive capacities of the body. Similarly, Milton, though his writing is not imbued with Crooke's technical language and knowledge, seems to draw the same parallel whenever he mentions hearing; speech is a sort of tool of power, and so the listener is always receptive, passive, and to an extent feminine in *Paradise Lost*. The speaker is in a position of power; the listener is entirely dependent on the things he or she hears. This seems like a general statement to make, however, the gender plays a large role in the Fall: it is Eve, female, who internalizes so much of the world that she is susceptible to the Satan toad's whispers. In the male-female dichotomy, the female (perhaps due to her capacity for bearing children) is naturally the receptive party; *Paradise Lost* applies the pattern of masculine sound and feminine hearing within other contexts. However, in the overall scheme of the poem,

speech is a tool, an invasive force, that exerts power over its listener by climbing into the brain via the ear.

Book VII, for instance, reinforces the chain of speaking and listening. Raphael tells Adam the story of the Earth's and his own creation, and all the while, Adam listens, absorbs, and is "filled / With admiration and deep muse, to hear / Of things so high and strange" (Milton 7.51-53). In these three lines, as in Crooke's entire section on hearing, there is the sense of the sounds' provocative power and permanence; they reverberate in Adam's mind and cause him to react "with deep muse." The angel tells him of things "so unimaginable / as hate in heav'n" – things theretofore unimaginable, that is: this passage is the beginning of the duality, the aporia that pervades *Paradise Lost* (Milton 7.54) The idea of hate is only unimaginable because it doesn't exist to Adam; the fact that the angel discusses it, though, sets up the stage for Eden's unraveling. The very same chain of hearing and then imagining the unimaginable happens to Eve when Satan squats at her ear and provokes her to dream the picking of the apple. It is important to remember that both involve a passive listener and a powerful speaker, and therefore parallel the process that Crooke and other scholars describe in their seventeenth-century medical works.

So, the angel's words fill Adam with wonder and cause him to consider the "unimaginable" very similarly to the way that Satan's words enter Eve's ear and cause her to have the dream. There are several differences, however, to explain why it isn't Adam that picks the apple and instigates the fall of mankind. The first of these is the fact that Adam is male. Since he is the "Reason" to her "Imagination" and the "Authority" to her "Experience," his mind does not absorb information quite in the same way that Eve's does, although in the situation with the Archangel, he is certainly meant to be the passive

and the receptive. He considers the possibility, the unimaginable idea of “hate,” a concept of which he knows nothing, but he winds up dismissing the idea as something beyond him. Eve, in the same situation, would dwell on such a concept until it would make itself reality. The second difference between the two situations is the fact that Adam is awake while he receives this information from Raphael, and Eve is asleep when Satan whispers into her ear. Adam’s already reasonable brain is fully aware of all its faculties and of all the sensory data around it, and hers is quite simply not. Crooke discusses the ear’s vulnerability as a direct passageway into the brain that isn’t blocked by anything when a person is asleep; without reason to discern important information and disregard the unsafe or unsavory, the person in question is more vulnerable. Both Adam and Eve have reasonable and imaginative qualities; however, they both also fulfill a role in the overall duality that exists between them, and since Adam embodies Reason, it is appropriate for him to hear about the possibility of “hate in heav’n” because he would simply accept it without needing to understand it. These are possibilities, “great things,” interjects Adam, “and full of wonder in our ears / far differing from this world”; this is a dismissal of sorts (Milton 7.70). He does not need to understand, in other words. God’s authority is enough for him. He has no urge to internalize the experience.

Even in the angel’s narrative, the voice as an active, male force holds tremendous power to move the universe. When God speaks, for instance, Chaos listens and reacts; “the Word” has the power to create a universe that is impossible otherwise. Because of the Word, heaven “open[s] wide / her ever-during gates, harmonious sound / On golden hinges moving, to let forth / The King of Glory in his powerful Word / And Spirit coming to create new worlds” (Milton 7.205-209). Even in this passage, the male-female

relationship of speaker and listener is evident: Milton gives the gates of heaven the feminine pronoun, while characterizing God as a man. Thereafter, he proclaims “let there be light,” and “forthwith light / Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure / Sprung from the deep, and from her native east” began to journey; here, once again, Milton makes the responsive party in the relationship, the light, female (Milton 7.243-245). In short, God says the Word, the Word is an inherently male force, and it invades the ear of the feminine universe and causes reactions to happen. The very language of the poem makes the fall a feminine problem, a problem of absorption and responsiveness. And when the angel is done speaking, his voice still resounds in Adam’s ear “so charming [...] that [Adam] a while / Thought [Raphael] still speaking, still stood fixed to hear” (Milton 8.1-3). Milton’s words here again remind of Crooke’s description, which I will explain below, of how sound repeats and echoes when it travels through the outer and inner ear. Simply put, there is a rhetorical similarity in the way that Milton and Crooke describe the hearing process that inherently feminizes hearing and premises the duality that makes the fall possible.

The conversation that occurs between Adam and Raphael is a parallel for the scenario that occurs “at the ear of Eve.” The factors are the same: a speaker, the concept of “the word,” a passive listener, and a subsequent mental process. However, Satan’s art is “devilish,” not holy and well intended like Raphael’s. Linguistically, there may also be a disparity between Raphael’s and Satan’s words in the way that they remain in their listeners’ heads. Raphael is heavenly, so his words have a certain Godlike power of repetition; they enter Adam’s mind in a different way than Satan’s enter into Eve’s ear, because Satan’s language is redundant and self-negating, not repetitious and productive.

Satan's language, already fallen (and thus fallible) when he enters Paradise, is like the destiny that will forever "redound upon his own rebellious head," according to God; his language has words, but no real power, except for in its repetition and redundant quality (Milton 3.85). This is, however, precisely the danger: the ear is a perfect locus for repetition because due to the inherent function of its shape, it is designed to itself repeat sounds and to transform them into some kind of logic. Although the reader has the opportunity to know Milton's account of exactly what Raphael says, and no chance to read Satan's words, based upon previous Satanic dialogue, it is safe to assume that there is a difference between heavenly and hellish rhetoric; this difference could perhaps account for a part of the fall. The reader does not know how Lucifer spoke before he fell from heaven. However, Satan's rhetoric here is composed of hypotheticals and of questions – in other words, the very uncertainties of language – and since these concepts are not yet known in Heaven, they are precisely the most dangerous.

The gendering and implications of Eve's dream

Having examined the gender that Milton subtly assigns to speaking and hearing, I now turn to the situation in which Eve finds herself in Book IV. Essentially because of the reasonable, dualistic differences (that is, the disparate genders) of Eden's two darling denizens, Satan's words are able to enter Eve's ear, and, unhindered by the bounds of reason, gestate within her sleeping mind into a sequence that then causes Eve to have a peculiar dream. In this dream, she picks an apple; this apple is a symbol or a premonition that then develops (fructifies) further in her already feminine, already vulnerable mind to create the inevitable impulse to pick the actual apple. The dream sequence foreshadows Eve's actual, empirical act later in the poem.

There is, however, a technical problem with making assumptions about Eve's dream: nowhere in *Paradise Lost* does Milton make any actual, verbal connection between the scene where Satan the toad squats by her ear and the scene where she dreams the temptation. David Aers, in his essay "Reflections on Freud, Milton, and Chaucer," asserts that Milton indeed never makes the connection between Satan's "squatting like a toad" and Eve's dreams. In fact, he points out that Milton (perhaps intentionally) separates the two events and the reader can thus only assume a relationship to exist between them. The narrator of the next book doesn't even mention the previous toad incident; instead, its effects are meant to be interpretable and ambiguous. "There," Aers writes, "we received no hint as to whether Satan's intrusions could have any effects on the sinless human," and the event is "certainly not offered as a determinate causal explanation for the dream's contents" (Aers 91). Milton doesn't attach the two events

together in any way. The contents of the dream, according to Aers, are instead located in “Eve’s inchoate feelings,” which are “systematically recapitulated in the Fall” (Aers 91).

Additionally, the fact remains that Eve discusses events with implications about which she could not possibly have any idea in her pre-lapsarian state. She “discloses her pleasures in the transgressions of the law she has been taught to obey, just as she discloses their fearfulness and the relief she feels at emerging from her fantasies unscathed” (Aers 91). The connection between the toad and the dream is an assumed, though logical, one; Eve dreams things that are theretofore impossible to her, and therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the ideas within the dream originate from some source (Satan, himself already fallen). This interpretation is in accordance with Freudian dream analysis, which states that it is virtually impossible to dream without knowing (that is, ‘experiencing’) what you’re dreaming about. “All the material making up the content of a dream,” Freud writes, in other words, “is in some way derived from experience, that is to say, has been reproduced or *remembered* in the dream” (Freud 69). It is impossible that Eve’s unprecedented dream originates in her own mind. It has to have its source elsewhere, namely in Satan, and the unfortunate circumstances of her femininity and her temporal vulnerability put her at risk of absorbing and developing the ideas that Satan presents to her into a reality. Satan in effect induces a false memory for Eve to “remember” within the context of her dream. In the words of Northrop Frye, who first established the Freudian link in his 1965 book *The Return of Eden*, “the occasion of her dream was Satan whispering in her ear; but the dream itself, in its manifest content, was a Freudian wish-fulfillment dream” (Frye 75). It is almost a self-fulfilling prophecy: if Freudian analysis is to be believed, and experience and dreaming go hand in hand, the

sheer impossibility of dreaming without experiencing would force (the already extremely empirical) Eve to go and commit the very act that she dreamed about.

Aers also mentions the discrepancies between Adam's and Eve's sleep. They vary in gender and in mental processes; it is only logical that there would be a difference in the way that they sleep and dream as well. On the page prior to Milton's discussion of Eve's dream, he makes some assertions that clarify the differences between the sleep patterns of the two. The passage reads:

When Adam waked, so custom'd, for his sleep
Was airy light, from pure digestion bred,
And temperate vapors bland, which th'only sound
Of leaves and fuming rills, Aurora's fan,
Lightly dispersed, and the shrill matin song
Of birds on every bough; so much the more
His wonder was to find unawaken'd Eve
With tresses discompos'd, and glowing cheek,
As through unquiet rest [...]

(Paradise Lost 5.3-11)

The difference between the sleep of the two sexes is obvious. Generally, the difference is attributed to the lack of reason or changes in the reasonable state that sleeping produces; for instance, Reid Barbour writes in his article "Liturgy and Dreams in Seventeenth-Century England" that "when Eve dreams, her reason and her gender collide" (Barbour 239). However, Aers points to descriptive "visual" cues to indicate the difference between the two. "Before Milton has Eve recount her dream," that is, in the very

beginning of the chapter, “he depicts Adam,” Aers writes, “he focuses on man’s ‘pure digestion,’ his ‘temperate vapours,’ and the ‘light sleep’ from which he wakes[.] This image provides a sharp contrast to that of the woman” (Aers 90). When Adam wakes quickly from his light sleep, un-bothered by any bodily humors or any of the other meddlesome female imbalances described above, he is surprised to find that there, next to him, Eve still lies. Her tresses are discomposed, and she is visibly red-cheeked and disturbed, and he notes that she is unable to hear the “matin song” because she is so tangled, presumably, in her dreams. This instance, and Adam’s confused reaction to it, establishes the difference in the way the two sleep and the points at which they awaken.

When Eve begins to retell the story of her dream, however, she does make a curious connection that somewhat connects the toad with her dream, although Milton makes it a point not to do so. “O sole in whom my thoughts find all repose,” she begins, addressing Adam, telling him also that she “dreamed, not as I oft am wont, of thee” but of a far more curious incident (note also the pun on “sole” and “soul”). Then, when she begins to describe what actually occurred, the reader is forced to make the connection to the toad at her ear: she dreamt instead

[...] of offense and trouble, which my mind
Knew never till this irksome night; methought
Close at mine ear one called me forth to walk
With gentle voice, I thought it thine; it said,
‘Why sleep’st thou Eve? now is the pleasant time [...]

(Paradise Lost 5.34-38)

In this passage, Eve describes something at her ear, which sounds quite a bit like the sequence where the two angels find Satan precisely there. Naturally, Eve assumes it to be Adam, since she knows of no other people in Eden; she also doesn't know to distrust the voice, both due to her innocence and also due to the fact that her reason is asleep at the moment. And aside from the impossibility of the transgression against Edenic law that Eve later describes herself as having committed in her dream, this particular sequence describes another impossibility: "offense and trouble" in the mind of an un-fallen human. Simply put, this is another indication of Satanic involvement.

Beyond the Satanic involvement, however, an important revelation within Book V is the moment where at least the semi-omniscient third-person narrator realizes that there is a difference between Adam and Eve. This difference is one of gender, and it is also a direct result of Eve's dream. Eve retells the story of the dream's plot (including the not-so-ambiguous phrase "I [...] Could not but taste," about the irresistible fruit), expresses her discomfort about it, and turns to Adam, whom she has proclaimed her "glory" and her "perfection," for advice (Milton 5.85-86; 29). He responds with what David Aers refers to as "theologico-moral concepts" and "psycho-physiological disturbances" in monologue format instead of engaging with her in a dialogue (Aers 91). And, when he is finished, he concludes and "neither he nor the author invites Eve's responses to his own reading" (Aers 91). This is a difference between the two that recounts their respective creations, but does not reflect the ideal nature of their power structure as a duality. Adam discounts the balance of the pair, of the Shoafian "dual," when he disregards Eve, and this, upsetting the delicate duality, forever separates the two. He makes his judgment in an attempt to "cheer his spouse," and, claims the narrator,

[...] she was cheered,
But silently a gentle tear let fall
From either eye, and wiped them with her hair;
Two other precious drops that ready stood,
Each in their crystal sluice, he ere they fell
Kissed as the gracious signs of sweet remorse
And pious awe, that feared to have offended.
So all was cleared, and to the field they haste.

(Paradise Lost 5.130-136)

In this passage, however, it is evident that Eve is not cheered. She is secretly upset because Adam fails her here. So, she sheds two tears that the narrator notes, and, although the passage claims that “all was cleared,” this clearly isn’t so. This is the moment in the poem that differentiates the two and forever splits them up. This moment is also the point Eve can cite later, when she realizes that the two are capable of working alone instead of alongside one another. This moment, the direct result of the dream, shatters the perfect symbiosis that they have enjoyed until now. And furthermore, this moment, as it were, results in the coming-true of the premonition that Eve’s dream presents.

So, the link between gender and dreaming is established by examining some of the physiological differences in the way the events proceed: Adam’s sleep is light while Eve’s dreams have a real, physical, corporeal effect on her. However, there is yet another, more specific way to examine how the sleep and dreams of Adam and Eve differ: to examine the connection between womanhood and brain activity within the

context of the medical theory of Milton's contemporaries. Some of the medical passages expressly connect the influence of the workings of the womb to mental processes; of course, since most medical theorists of the time consider femininity a disadvantage, the effects are generally negative. However, the connection is noteworthy. Gualtherus Bruele, for instance, in his *Praxis Medicinae*, expounds upon the terrible mental corruption that can occur when the womb harbors an abundance of noxious humours for too long. The result is apparently that, subsequently, "from whence life arises, from thence also the deadliest bane of venom springs" because of the womb's distinctly female tendency to absorb. From here, it is apparently "an easy matter for venomous matter to be carried not only by veins and arteries, but also by secret breathing holes into the upper parts and so disturb their functions" (Bruele 374). Bruele connects something undeniably feminine with disturbances and changes in mental processes; sleep could probably be counted among these. Bruele also mentions that occasionally, conditions of the "Mother," a womb- (and thus woman) specific disorder, include "a deep sleep" and occasional "sudden dumb[ness]" (Bruele 273). The cause of this disconcerting ailment is, of course, "menstruous blood" that remains too long in the womb and begins to putrefy – a process that could ostensibly echo Eve's (woman's) tendency to absorb information and process it until it turns into what is essentially a bad idea (picking the apple). And Lemnius Levinus makes an even further comment on the link between the mind and the womb in the body of a woman in 1658's *The Secret Miracles of Nature*. "Sometimes," he writes, a "false conception [that is, a pregnancy] is made without the help of a man, by Imagination only in those that are very lascivious" (Levinus 23). Although Levinus's note has little to do with Eve's condition, it does shed light on the

seventeenth-century consensus on the connection between physiology and mental processes. The connection between the way that the feminine mind hears and imagines is obvious. The differences between the two genders are, beyond everything, corporeal.

Even more specifically, the association of female passivity and hearing is not an original concept: in fact, some textual clues indicate that it could have its roots in the medical theory of Milton's contemporaries. For instance, Crooke, in *Mikrokosmographia*, examines the process of hearing and the structure of the ear itself in distinctly feminine terms. Furthermore, Crooke relies on a certain language that deals with the equality and harmony that come from two distinct parts functioning together: this, also, is not unlike the relationship of the two denizens of Eden. Crooke's analysis of the balance of the ear reflects (and perhaps partly explains) the inherent balance necessary in the maintenance of humanity.

The connection between *Paradise Lost* and 17th-century medical text

I. Repetition, echo, sound

Throughout Book IV, there is a repetition of the “-ear” sound pervading the text that leads up to the line “at the ear;” this repetition is a reflection of the anatomy described in the medical text that I will examine next. The repeating sound establishes a connection between the text of the scene and the ear itself. “Dearly I abide that boast so vain,” says Satan, ruing his own mistake, and then, a few lines down, he repeats the word “dear” and follows it with the word “fear,” both at the end of a line of poetry (Milton 4.87, 101, 108). After Satan finishes speaking, Milton then reasserts the sound when he claims that “heav’nly minds from such distempers foul / Are ever clear;” however, unlike when Satan is speaking, this “-ear” sound does not come at the end of a line and therefore does not have the same kind of redundant (Satanic) quality. Later in Book IV, there is the phrase “all ear to hear,” describing the way that Eve turns to hear Adam’s declaration of “moving speech” to her, the oxymoronic “sole partner” who is to him “dearer [...] than all” (Milton 4.410-412). Following that, there are mentions of “fear,” “spear,” “rear,” and the concept of “unendeared” love and “casual fruition” (Milton 4.553, 574, 699, 766). The “-ear” sound loops and repeats until finally, at the end of the chapter, when the toad squats next to Eve, the reader is already subconsciously familiar with it. This is not unlike the introduction of the dream to Eve’s susceptible mind: the dream serves a similar purpose, and that is to make possible the picking of the apple by introducing it as a possibility. Linguistically, the repetition serves essentially the same purpose; furthermore, it is a direct reflection of the mechanics and the function of the ear itself that

Crooke describes in his passages on hearing. For Crooke, the ear echoed sound, multiplied it within its own structures, and repeated it until it reached the brain; Milton does precisely this when he repeats the “-ear” sound until the fateful moment when Satan is actually present at Eve’s ear. Basically, in order to understand all of Milton’s hearing references, it is imperative to examine also the medical texts that called them forth in the seventeenth century.

II. The outer ear and the general shape of the ear

Milton, by repeating the “-ear” sound, sets the stage for the metaphorical penetration of the ear; however, the physiology of the organ behind the trope is also an issue that needs to be addressed with regard to the fall. The ear is the gateway to the mind, to imagination, to consciousness, but on the other hand, it is always open and guarded only by the sentry of reason that every human being possesses. The passages that deal with the function and the physiology of the ear in Crooke’s *Mikrokosmographia* tend to keep with the gender themes that also present themselves within the poetry of (and explain the events that occur within) *Paradise Lost*. That is, Milton and Crooke, though working in vastly different fields, share tropes; their descriptions are quite similar, which indicates a connection, a set of terminology that both connects and limits the two seventeenth-century writers. Milton, having Crooke’s scientific and anatomical knowledge to work with and from, writes the denizens of Eden into being with this data in mind; they are therefore also subject to the linguistic biases and limitations from which Milton himself suffers. The lexicon of Milton’s contemporaries, that is, constrains Milton’s writing; this is especially evident in the toad scene and in the dream sequence and its aftermath.

The most striking issue is that there is a series of undeniable connections in the manner that the two writers deal with certain subjects. First, there is the function of the ear as equalizer in *Mikrokosmographia*: its purpose seems to be to allow the brain to interpret sound by taking in the violent outer air (which carries the sound) and then harmonizing it via its natural shape. *Paradise Lost* echoes this theme, at least according to Shoaf, in its treatment of duality – Adam and Eve are two parts of a single whole, and

their togetherness creates a kind of interdependent harmony. Crooke, in his own epic work, spends a great deal of time discussing the need for balance between the outside air and the ear, as well as within the ear's natural pressure and "inner air." The harmony in duality or present between two parts of something seems to be mirrored in both the presence of the two genders in Eden as well within the duality between Reason and Fancy that governs the mind. The two works echo each other in their discussions of interdependent parts that create a harmonious balance by working together.

The second overarching theme in Crooke's *Mirokosmographia* is similar to Milton's epic in that it deals with dualities, reproduction, and images. Repetition and similarity, as concepts, are clearly reflected in *Paradise Lost* in how the epic deals with the idea of man as an image of God. For Crooke, in turn, the idea of image and repetition presents itself anatomically – for instance, the tympane, a structure of the inner ear, takes the sound (which enters the ear in physical form) and reproduces it in order to refine sound and aid it in reaching the inner ear. As it is, the two ideas (balance and reproduction) come up time and again in Crooke's descriptions of the ear, and seem to be reminiscent of some of the delicate balances that Milton establishes within his narrative of the fall of mankind in *Paradise Lost*.

The passage on the ear is located directly after a discussion of the humors and how they deal with the sense of sight; its location indicates its importance in the sensory network that makes up the unique human comprehension. Everything is interconnected and harmonious; this is perhaps why before even moving on to the actual physical description of the ear, Crooke's passage begins by naming and philosophical purpose of the "organ of hearing." He touches on various Miltonic issues, and, although gender is

not quite yet among them, they are still crucial in explaining both the function of hearing in the poem and the way the gender argument eventually delineates in both works. Crooke explains the importance of the ear by telling his reader that “Aristotle called [hearing] *Sensum Disciplina*, because it was created for the understanding of Arts and Sciences, for Speech, because it is audible, becometh the Cause of that we learn” (Crooke 573). Right away, Crooke creates a fundamental link between hearing and understanding, that is, between the physical and the mental processes – and thus the comprehension specifically of “arts and sciences.” This understanding is the very thing that separates humankind from the animal kingdom and makes Adam “different” from the creatures with which he is surrounded. The ear is the way to understanding, and since human understanding is a premise for human language, the ear is, therefore, the very reason that Eve is created. Adam demands, primarily, someone “like” him, that is, someone endowed with the same kind of understanding, with which he can communicate; the ear as an organ is key in this communication. However, since he is imperfect since he is “like” God but not the same as God, the ear is also one of the reasons behind gender differentiation. Hearing and gender are in this way invariably linked together; Crooke’s scientific reason for the ear’s existence and quality provides one of the reasons for the creation of two human beings in Paradise. To Crooke, the ear is instrumental in that it both allows and refines information (in the form of sound, which exists as matter in the air) into the mind to be processed, as well as discerns its importance (as per the Aristotelian suffix *disciplina*). That is, the ears are the gateway to the brain, which is the locus of both Reason and Imagination, among other things. As he himself says on the following pages, “the principal instrument [...] of hearing [...] lies hid within the skull.

The outward Ears therefore are helping causes,” aiding the process of hearing – the ears assist the process, but are not themselves the sole causes or means of hearing (Crooke 574). The actual, physical entry of the sound into the ear is only one step toward the understanding of sound; the important part is really its comprehension in the brain. Adam, in Book VIII, knows he is as yet lonely in that no creature in Paradise possesses the level of understanding that he does, and this is why he asks God to create a companion for him.

Interestingly, Crooke also moves on to implore God’s help in the section on hearing in his *Mikrokosmographia*; apparently, the structure of the ear is so complex that he asks for assistance in his endeavor to detail and discuss its inner workings. Before he can even begin his discussion, Crooke begs for the “power perspicuously to propound and lay open to your capacities a thing so diversely and quaintly folded up” as the ear (Crooke 573). The passage stresses to the reader the complexity of the ear, which, in its structure, function, and location, is quite unlike anything else. Crooke goes on, in fact, to discuss the ear for the entirety of thirty pages – only to conclude that “to entreat of the manner of Hearing belongeth rather to a Philosopher than to Anatomists” (Crooke 611). The structures of the ear seem to be overwhelming; its function as a vessel that aids comprehension and mental processes like Reason and Imagination (Fancy) perhaps seem even more so – but nevertheless, Crooke launches from his introduction straight into an incredibly detailed description of the organ’s already complex physiology.

Also an interesting though perhaps irrelevant or unintentional point in Crooke’s introduction is the inclusion in the invocation of God of the word “quaint.” This word, having etymological origin in the Latin *cognitum*, refers to sensory data, the

ascertainment of things, and the rational faculties involved in generally understanding the arts and sciences. However, it shares its roots also, via the incarnation *queinte* or *cuinte*, with the word “cunt.” Crooke may not have intended for this particular connotation to demonstrate a point between comprehension and gender, but the connotation to femaleness is quite present in seventeenth-century colloquialism (occurring at least in some of Shakespeare’s writing).

As a final introduction prior to launching into pure physiology, Crooke acknowledges that animals also come equipped with ears. He differentiates the human ears by discussing their specific placement, however, and in doing so, again qualifies Adam’s argument for the necessity of a companion equipped with the same ears and thus capable of the same level of understanding. The ears, in humans, are located strategically at eye-level and, according to Crooke, this precise point allows for a delicate balance between eyesight and hearing that is uniquely human and uniquely balanced to allow for maximum interaction between the two senses as well as maximum comprehension in the brain. They are placed “in the same parallel or line with the eyes, yet not so much for the better reception of sounds, [...] but rather from the commodity of those soft nerves within the skull which were to communicate the “animal spirit” dispersed through the substance of the brain” (Crooke 574). The ears, he continues, couldn’t have been placed on the front, because the eyes are designated to take up that space. Both are part of the delicate network of “soft nerves” leading to the brain and thus both need to be located on the head and in close proximity to the nerve center. Otherwise, “if the ears had their situation only for the apprehension of sounds, they might as well have been placed in any part of the creature,” because sounds are “equally communicated to the whole air” (Crooke 574).

He adds that the ears couldn't possibly be placed on the back part of the head, because "there are no nerves derived thereunto" (Crooke 574). All of this detail of a delicate network of nerves serves to underscore the need for balance and order that is necessary for the human capacity of reasoning. (This is also the reason for the ears' existence in double – it is necessary to have two ears for the "perfection of the sense;" in this way, Crooke proves a rather Miltonic point that two, when functioning together, are more perfect than one) (Crooke 576).

In animals, he suggests, the ears are located and shaped for convenience, as on birds, who, if equipped with "such ears as other creatures," would find them "a hindrance unto them in their flight [...] in beasts also the ears are moveable (Crooke 574). Apes, however, strike another balance in their physiology: that between beast and man. Their ears "have a middle position betwixt those of men and beasts," because apes themselves lie in the realm between human and animal; their ears, therefore, are not "immovable as in men, nor so movable as in other beasts" (Crooke 574). The placement of the ear is clearly key in its function as is its form; Crooke also goes into great detail about the importance of the shape of the ear. According to him, the ear "like a fan is dilated" in order to intercept as many sounds as possible (Crooke 577). The shape is a fundamental difference between man and beast; otherwise, Crooke suggests, humankind would also have to "prick" its ears at each sound. Instead, the human ear sits just far enough from the eye to strike a delicate, unique balance between the two senses. According to Crooke, therefore, Adam is right when he says that he couldn't possibly accurately communicate with animals.

Within the round outside of the ear, “gibbous” for maximum capacity (that is, to be able to gather as much sound into itself as possible), there are “certain swellings [in place] to break the violent rushing of the air or wind or whatsoever should unawares be offered against them” (Crooke 575). These “swellings,” anatomically speaking, provide a means of softening the outside air. This is the first step in the balancing of the air that carries the sound with the inner air of the ear. The main purpose of the physiology of the outer ear is, then, to begin to achieve balance in order to perfect the hearing process. It is here, in the outer ear, that the air “boundeth and reboundeth as a ball” until it becomes “more harmoniacal” than it was before (Crooke 575). In this passage, Crooke stresses the need for harmony: the sound that is carried in the air would otherwise be lost in the “violence” and tumult that he describes in the air. The outer ear acts, in other words, as a mediator between sound and comprehension; it begins to soften and refine sound until it becomes something worthy of the comprehension of the brain. All of this expounds upon the importance of balance and harmony, a theme that *Paradise Lost* explores within all of its dualities, as well as begins to express precisely how important the role of the ear is in the poem, medically speaking.

Crooke’s passages also reflect a curious rhetoric about the in-between nature of the outer ear: he seems unable to categorize many of its characteristics, such as the cartilage. Crooke reasons the structure of the ear carefully: “the substance of the outer ear is neither bony nor fleshy, but of a middle nature betwixt both,” the text reads, for if it were made of thin bone, it would be too easily broken, and if the bone were thick, then it would be burdensome to the head (Crooke 581). However, the ear is not simply made of “flesh” because it would “fall[...] unto itself,” unable to receive or bounce back the

sound and thus collapsing purposeless (Crooke 582). *Paradise Lost* also presents the concept of falling unto oneself due to the futility of being unable to reproduce. It is a part of the Satanic problem, the way in which Lucifer himself falls short, the reason that he cannot himself “cause” the fall of humankind but rather needs to motivate one of Eden’s two denizens to pick the apple. The ability to repeat without redounding, conversely, is divine specifically because God can make something in his “image” that is not like him – it is the reason that there can be two sexes and two persons that are equally as perfect and equally as human in Paradise. The human body is divine in its design; with his reflections on the cartilaginous form of the ear, Crooke strikes here upon this very Miltonic theme.

In Crooke’s writing, then, the ear is special among body parts: its purpose as the gateway between the air and the mind demands a specific structure that is unlike that of any other body part. Crooke also stresses the ear’s importance with regard to sleep – “saith Cicero [...] when we are asleep, we have need of this sense that we might be waked” precisely because it is the connecting door between the physical world and imagination (Crooke 582). All other discerning senses shut down when we are asleep: the eyes close, the mouth tastes nothing, the nose may smell but is unable to do anything – however, the ear continues to receive sound and the sleeping person may thereby be awakened. When this particular characteristic – this oddity of cartilage – is taken into account with the role of the ear as the mediator between the physical world and the realm of reason and imagination, its role and its particular importance in *Paradise Lost* begins to clarify.

III. The inner ear

The thematic similarities only continue to establish themselves deeper as Crooke's descriptions get more detailed and reach further into the ear. The "hole of hearing," that is, the ear canal, is "oblique and winding to break the vehement appulsion, or rushing in, of the cold air [so that] it should not dissolve the harmony of the Tympane and the nerve of hearing" (Crooke 585). Yet again, the subject of harmony comes up; Crooke reaffirms the purpose of the design to be for the achievement of equilibrium. However, there is also a natural mechanism to repel any outside interference: the passage runs "forward and upward," turning, "lest those things that fall outwardly upon the ear should easily be admitted into the cavity" and cause trouble (Crooke 585). These things include some largish particles, such as "small creatures," crumbs, or peas. However, the narrowing and turning of the ear canal is meant also for the refinement of sound: its tunnel, through sheer technical design, serves to "more exquisitely represent the nature of sound" (Crooke 586). It would not, unfortunately, deter unwanted words from entering. It would simply do its best to sweeten and sharpen them, and this is especially dangerous in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, since Eve is asleep. Satan's words aren't filtered by reason but only made more beautiful and compelling.

Then there is the matter of purging the ear: one of the purposes of the ear canal, according to Crooke, is to rid the ear of the "choleric excrement of the brain" (presumably in the form of ear wax), which, in seventeenth-century medicine, was sure to cause certain symptoms in sleep patterns and mood (Crooke 586). It also makes a strange connection between the ear and the womb (another body part that requires purging from time to time), and therefore implicitly also between hearing and femininity. Additionally,

Crooke claims there to be a connection between the ear and the mouth, and cites this a marvel of nature that leads to efficient expurgation of “superfluities that fall out of the head” (Crooke 587). There is also another purpose for this connective canal: to refine the “in-bred air” of the ear and keep it at a constant clarity, freshness, and temperature. The inbred air is constantly present in the ear, according to this passage, and must consequently also be always kept in balance. (Also, interestingly enough, Crooke writes that people can be taught to “hear” through their mouths via this particular passage.) (Crooke 587) And, in the case of a loud noise such as thunder or another disturbance in the air, the connective passage keeps the tympane from rupturing by allowing the in-bred air to escape. Since it is normally located behind the ear drum (or tympane), according to Crooke, and an unusually loud noise would cause such a disturbance as to forcefully enter the ear without being processed and harmonized by the ear’s own systems, the outside air would press against the tympane and cause it to rupture if the inner air in fact had no way out. The system of tunnels in the ear is, to Crooke, another way in which the ear demonstrates its equilibrium and constant working toward the achievement of harmony in the head.

Leading forth from the tympane, there is another part of the ear from which an interesting connection to *Paradise Lost* can be made. It is the “process” by which the eardrum is connected to the “stony bone,” and Crooke writes of its origins in the “scaly bone,” saying it resembles a “knub or a knot;” it is this that keeps the tympane secured by stretching and becoming flexible when there is a rush of external air such as the aforementioned. *Paradise Lost* echoes this knotty and looping image several times: Milton writes of the looping serpent as well as of the serpentine nature of Eve’s hair.

Perhaps this is the parallel that makes the ear so pertinent to Eve as a symbol. Eve's very existence harmonizes Adam: she is his parallel, though different – as one of her functions in the poem, this balance is rather similar to the physical purpose of the ear. In any case, when reading the description with the poem in mind, the image of “knots” and loops evokes Milton's distinct descriptions of Eve almost immediately. Milton describes Eve's hair in the following way:

Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved
As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
Subjection, but required with gentle sway [.]

(Paradise Lost 4.305-308)

In Miltonic language, there is something unabashedly feminine about the looping form, the curl and the ringlet; therefore, there is also something tying together Eve, the serpent, and the looping structures of the ear. Their forms are all alike, and they all function together in a way that brings forth the fall of mankind and the demise of Eden.

Additionally, however, one of the major gestures of the difference that exists between Adam and Eve occurs when Eve silently sheds a tear after she awakens from the dream that the toad's words spurned forth from her. She wipes the tear away with her hair, which, serpentine and looping, is inseparably connected with both her femaleness and with the ear.)

Conclusion: The necessity of the fall in the context of the dualities in *Paradise Lost*

All things considered, the ear in *Paradise Lost* is a powerful symbol. Its shape, location, and function are compellingly rich in meaning from a purely physical standpoint: Crooke, Levinus, Bruele, and other seventeenth-century physicians and anatomists are fascinated by its complex structures and intricate details. It provides guaranteed access to the brain, whether the subject is awake or asleep; it alone connects with the subtlest parts of the human mind irregardless of the state of its possessor. Also, it is specifically this precise combination of characteristics and functions that makes the ear an important part of the difficult-to-define state of being human. The ear, argues Crooke, has to be placed just so on the skull in order for all of these characteristics to function in an optimal, uniquely human way. And this is why the ear is so crucial in the events just before and leading up to the temptation scene. Its shape, location, and function allow Satan access to the mind of the more manipulable of the two genders; its proximity to her brain allows for his words to gestate and grow into an idea. The ear is both the symbolic and physical locus for the biggest key plot event of Milton's entire epic. Without it, the poem's events could not have occurred the way they did. Therefore, it also becomes exceedingly obvious that without Milton's knowledge of the medical theory of his contemporaries, the fall would not have been written the same way that it was written.

Certainly behind the ear there looms also the presence of the duality, the reason the toad specifically chooses Eve's ear to crouch by: it consists of the "dual," the two; it consists of Adam and Eve, male and female, reason and imagination, the distinct states of being awake and asleep. So, essentially, Adam and Eve are two separate persons; they

are different, though interdependent, and thus their dreams, their bodily processes, and, most importantly, the way in which they hear, are also different. Adam, masculine reason, listens without questioning, while Eve, empirical female, feels the need to go out and experience. That is, the simple fact of physical gender differentiation causes a difference in listening, thinking, and susceptibility to harm (or at least vulnerability to the kind of “outside stimuli” that Freud claims can cause dreams to occur).

If, however, the temptation scene is a result of an inherent division, if it occurs simply because there are two different people in Paradise, then is humanity’s fall inevitable? The answer would appear to be that yes, under these circumstances, as there are two separate and distinct people in Paradise, the fall is without a doubt destined to occur. It is impossible to speculate whether anything of the sort would inevitably have happened without Satan, as he is the source of the “external stimuli” that enters Eve’s mind; however, with his influence, humankind falls because of the dual nature of its species. Neither Adam nor Eve is complete in and of themselves, although they are both capable of living, of existing, without one another – technically. But both possess a reasonable and sound mind; the grand difference is in their bodies, which in turn come to represent, for Adam at least, the rift between reason and imagination, authority and experience. They indicate an interdependency that causes Adam to eat of the apple as well. Eve is not the only reason for the fall of humanity. The fault lay in the need for more than one person, for a difference in gender to occur in Paradise.

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