



William Faithorne's engraved portrait of Milton for the frontispiece of
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The Cambridge Companion to Milton

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6 The genres of *Paradise Lost*

The Renaissance is a period of heightened genre consciousness in literary theory and poetic practice, and Milton is arguably the most genre-conscious of English poets. His great epic, *Paradise Lost*, is preeminently a poem about knowing and choosing – for the Miltonic Bard, for the characters, for the reader. One ground for such choices is genre, Milton's own choice and use of a panoply of literary forms, with their accumulated freight of cultural significances shared between author and audience.

Critics have long recognized and continue to discover in Milton's poem an Edenic profusion of thematic and structural elements from a great many literary genres and modes, as well as a myriad of specific allusions to major literary texts and exemplary works. Almost everyone agrees that *Paradise Lost* is an epic whose closest structural affinities are to Virgil's *Aeneid*, and that it undertakes in some fashion to redefine classical heroism in Christian terms (Bowra; Di Cesare; Hunter; Steadman 1967). We now recognize as well how many major elements derive from other epics. From Homer's *Iliad*: a tragic epic subject – here, the death and woe resulting from an act of disobedience; a hero (Satan) motivated like Achilles by a sense of injured merit; the battle scenes in heaven (Blessington 1979; Mueller). From the *Odyssey*: Satan's wiles and craft; and Satan's Odysseus-like adventures on the perilous seas (of Chaos) and in new lands (Aryanpur; Steadman 1968, 194–208). From Hesiod's *Theogony*: many aspects of the war in heaven between the good and evil angels (Hughes 1965; Revard). From Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: the pervasiveness of change and transformation – diabolic and divine – in the Miltonic universe (Harding 1946; Lewalski 1985, 71–6; Martz). From Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*: the Paradise of Fools (Hughes 1967; Schumacher). From the *Faerie Queene*: the Spenserian allegorical characters, Sin and Death (Greenlaw; Heatt; Williams; Quilligan). From Du Bartas's massive hexameron (creation epic), *The Divine Weeks and Works*: Milton's brief epic of creation in Book 7 (Evans; Snyder, 1: 82–8; Taylor). In more general terms, Milton's Eden is in some respects a romance

garden of love in which a hero and heroine must withstand a dragon of sorts (Giamatti). Moreover, because heroic values have been so profoundly transvalued in *Paradise Lost*, the poem is sometimes assigned to categories beyond epic: pseudomorph, prophetic poem, apocalypse, anti-epic, transcendent epic (Spencer; Steadman 1973; Wittreich 1975; Tolliver; Webber).

Many dramatic elements have also been identified: some vestiges of Milton's early sketches for a drama entitled *Adam Unparadis'd*; some structural affinities to contemporary epics in five 'acts', such as Davanant's *Gondibert*; and tragic protagonists who fall from happiness to misery through *hamartia* (Barker; Rollin; Sirluck). Others include the tragic soliloquies of Satan and Adam, recalling those of Dr Faustus and Macbeth; the morality-play 'Parliament of Heaven' sequence in the debate of God and the Son (3.80–343); the scene of domestic farce in which Satan first vehemently repudiates and then fawns upon his reprehensible offspring, Sin and Death (2.643–883); the scenes of domestic tragedy in Books 9 and 10 which present Adam and Eve's quarrel, Fall, mutual recriminations, and (later) reconciliation; and the tragic masques or pageants of Books 11 and 12, portraying the sins and miseries of human history (Demaray; Gardner; Grossman; Hunter 72–95; Kranidas; Samuel).

The panoply of kinds includes pastoral: landscape descriptions of Arcadian vistas; pastoral scenes and eclogue-like passages presenting the *otium* (ease, contentment) of heaven and unfallen Eden; and scenes of light georgic gardening activity (Daniells; Empson 149–94; Frye 1965; Knott). Also, several kinds of lyrics embedded in the epic have received some critical attention: celebratory odes, psalmic hymns of praise and thanksgiving, submerged sonnets, an epithalamium (wedding song), love lyrics (*aubade*, nocturne, sonnet), laments and complaints (Summers 71–86; McCown; Johnson; Nardo; Blessington 1986). There are also many rhetorical and dialogic kinds which have not been much studied from the perspective of genre: Satan's several speeches of political oratory in Books 1 and 2; God's judicial oration defending his ways (3.80–134); the parliamentary debate in hell over war and peace (2.11–378); the Satan–Abdiel debate over God's right of sovereignty (5.772–895); a treatise on astronomical systems (8.15–178); a dialogue on human nature between God and Adam (8.357–451) and another on love between Raphael and Adam (8.521–643); Michael's lectures on Christian historiography in Books 11 and 12; Satan's temptation speech to Eve in the style and manner of 'some orator renowned / In Athens or free Rome' (9.670–732; Amorose; Broadbent; Burden; MacCallum; Steadman 1968, 241–62; Steadman 1969, 67–92).

If we ask why Milton incorporated so complete a spectrum of literary forms and genres in *Paradise Lost*, a partial answer must be that much Renaissance critical theory supports the notion of epic as a heterocosm or compendium of subjects, forms, and styles. Homer's epics, Rosalie Colie has reminded us (22–3), were widely recognized as the source and origin of all arts and sciences – philosophy, mathematics, history, geography, military art, religion, hymnic praise, rhetoric – and of all literary forms. Renaissance tradition also recognized the Bible as epic-like in its comprehension of all history, all subject matters, and many genres – law, history, prophecy, heroic poetry, psalm, allegory, proverb, hymn, sermon, epistle, tragedy, tragicomedy, and more (Lewalski 1966, 10–36; Lewalski 1979, 31–71; Wittreich 1979, 9–26).

Responding to this tradition, Renaissance poets devised epics on inclusivist lines. Tasso, whom Milton recognized as the premier epic poet and theorist among the moderns, observed that Homer and Virgil had intermingled all forms and styles in their great epics, but claimed for Renaissance heroic poems (with obvious reference to his own *Gerusalemme Liberata*) an even greater range and variety, imaging the entire created universe (Tasso 78). Moreover, the major sixteenth-century English narratives with claims to epic status – Sidney's *New Arcadia* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* – were quite obviously mixtures of epic, romance, pastoral, allegory, and song. But if contemporary theory and practice gave Milton ample warrant to comprehend a very broad spectrum of literary kinds within *Paradise Lost*, he did not make of it a mausoleum of dead forms. On the contrary, all of Milton's major poems are invested with an imaginative energy which profoundly transforms the genres themselves, creating new models which profoundly influenced English and American writers for three centuries.

Attention to Milton's generic strategies can also highlight some important ways in which Renaissance poetic theory and practice intersect with contemporary critical concerns: intertextuality, the springs of poetic creativity and authority, the responses of the reader (Bloom; Greene; Kerrigan; Fish). In regard to genre, Milton's poem manifests several of the so-called 'novelistic' characteristics the Russian genre-theorist Mikhail Bakhtin finds in many Renaissance and post-Renaissance prose narratives: multiple genres, including extra-literary kinds, which create multiple perspectives upon the subject; the dialogic interaction of forms; the 'polyglossia' of several generic languages within the work; strong connectives linking the poem to contemporary reality; the valorization of process. Yet while these characteristics give Milton's modern epic enormous complexity, they do not produce the indeterminacy and inconclusiveness Bakhtin associates with

them. In pursuing these and other suggestive connections between Renaissance and contemporary poetic theory we need to recognize some fundamental differences in assumptions about poetry and the poet, grounded chiefly in the Renaissance and Miltonic conception of the poet as teacher and rhetor.

Milton's complex use of the Renaissance genre system serves in part to enable his own poetic vision, since it is only through such literary forms, which embody the shared imaginative experience of Western man and woman, that the Miltonic Bard is able to imagine and articulate his vision of the truth of things. But also, it is only through such forms that he can accommodate that vision to readers present and future, educating them in the complex processes of making discriminations which are at once literary and moral. Milton's comments about poetry in *The Reason of Church-Government* and the pedagogic ideal he sets forth in *Of Education* suggest that as teacher and rhetor he wishes to advance our understanding through a literary regimen at once intellectually demanding and delightful (YP 1: 801–23; 3: 366–79). In *Paradise Lost* his method is to build upon and let his readers refine their responses to the cultural values and assumptions encoded in the genre system – about man and woman, God, nature, language, heroism, virtue, pleasure, work, and love (Lewalski 1985).

Since terms relating to genre have often been used inconsistently, we need a few definitions which accord with the concepts of major Renaissance and modern genre-theorists (Scaliger; Minturno 1559, 1564; Puttenham; Sidney; Frye; Fowler). In the Renaissance, the familiar triad of narrative, dramatic, and lyric normally carried meanings deriving from Plato's and Aristotle's three kinds of imitation or presentation, so I shall refer to them here as *literary categories* or *strategies of presentation*. The term *Genre* (or *kind*, the usual Renaissance word) is reserved for the historical genres – epic, tragedy, sonnet, funeral elegy, hymn, epigram, and many more – which are identified in classical and Renaissance theory and poetic practice by specific formal and thematic elements, topics, and conventions. Alastair Fowler (37–74) discusses these historical genres as families whose members share several (but not always the same) features, among them formal structure, metre, size, scale, strategy of presentation, subject, values, mood, occasion, attitude, style, motifs. *Subgenres* are formed by further specification of subject matter and topics – for example, the revenge tragedy is a subgenre of tragedy. The term *Mode* is appropriate for several expressive literary kinds – pastoral, satiric, comedic, heroic, elegiac, and tragic, among others – which are identified chiefly by subject matter, attitude, tonality, and motifs, and which interpenetrate works or parts of works in several genres.

For example, we may have a *pastoral* comedy or novel or song, a *tragic* epic, or short story, or ballad, a *satiric* verse epistle or epigram or essay.

Milton's 'Preface' to Book 2 of the *Reason of Church-Government* (1642) provides some indication of his complex approach to the Renaissance genre system. Referring to the epic–dramatic–lyric triad, he deliberates about a wide range of genre choices and notable models – classical, biblical, or contemporary – within each category:

Time serves not now, and perhaps I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home in the spacious circuits of her musing hath liberty to propose to her self, though of highest hope, and hardest attempting, whether that Epick form whereof the two poems of *Homer*, and those other two of *Virgil* and *Tasso* are a diffuse, and the book of *Job* a brief model . . . Or whether those Dramatick constitutions, wherein *Sophocles* and *Euripides* raigue shall be found more doctrinal and exemplary to a Nation, the Scripture also affords us a divine pastoral Drama in the Song of *Salomon* consisting of two persons and a double *Chorus*, as *Origen* rightly judges. And the Apocalyps of Saint *John* is the majestick image of a high and stately Tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn Scenes and Acts with a sevenfold *Chorus* of halleluja's and harping symphonies . . . Or if occasion shall lead to imitate those magnifick Odes and Hymns wherein *Pindarus* and *Callimachus* are in most things worthy, some others in their frame judicious, in their matter most an end faulty: But those frequent songs throughout the law and prophets beyond all these, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition may be easily made appear over all the kinds of Lyrick poesy, to be incomparable. (YP 1: 812–16)

Remarkably, Milton incorporates virtually the entire genre system in *Paradise Lost*, achieving effects which can only be suggested here through a few examples.

Milton employs specific literary modes in his epic to characterize the various orders of being: the heroic mode for Satan and his damned society; mixed for the celestial society of the angels; pastoral (opening out to georgic and comedic) for prelapsarian life in Eden; tragic (encompassing at length postlapsarian georgic, pastoral, and heroic) for human life in the fallen world. These modes establish the affective quality of the several segments of the poem, through appropriate subject matter, motifs, tone, and language, and each mode is introduced by explicit literary signals. As the narrative begins, the epic question and answer present Satan and hell in heroic terms, with reference to a range of epic passions, motives, and actions: 'pride', 'glory', 'ambitious aim', 'impious war in heaven', 'battle proud' (1.34–44). The Edenic pastoral mode is introduced by reference to the garden as 'A happy rural seat of various view' (4.247). The forthright announcement 'I

now must change / These notes to tragic' (9.5–6) heralds the Fall sequence. And the claim that this tragic subject is 'not less but more heroic' than traditional epic themes (9.14) leads into the mixed modes of postlapsarian but regenerate human life.

These several modes import into the poem the values traditionally associated with them: great deeds, battle courage, glory (*aristeia*) for the heroic mode; love and song, *otium*, the carefree life for pastoral; responsibility, discipline, the labour of husbandry for georgic; the easy resolution of difficulties through dialogue and intellect for the comedic; the pity and terror of the human condition for the tragic. These contrasting modes and their modulations, together with the mixed modes which present life in the heavenly society, engage us in an on-going critique of the various perspectives on human life which they provide.

Within this structure of literary modes Milton incorporates a great many narrative, dramatic, lyric, and discursive genres. The longer narrative and dramatic kinds – epic and romance, tragedy and comedy – are incorporated through what I term generic paradigms, identified by characteristic themes, motifs, conventions, and structural patterns associated with the given genre. These generic paradigms are further reinforced by verbal allusions, plot analogies, and references to scenes, episodes, and motifs in major classical and Renaissance works in each kind. By this means we are invited to identify certain genres and certain poems as subtexts for portions of Milton's poem, and then to attend to the completion or transformation of those allusive patterns as the poem proceeds. Let us examine some of these paradigms.

Satan, we soon discover, enacts the generic paradigms of one after another of the heroic genres (epic of strife, quest epic, romance): he is thereby measured against the most notable heroes in all these kinds, promoting an exhaustive examination of the meaning of heroism. The opening scene in hell displays the distinctive topics and conventions of the epic of wrath and strife: Homeric catalogues of leaders, epic games, a council of war, addresses to armies. In relation to this paradigm, Satan reveals himself by degrees as a debased version of Achilles and Aeneas, the most notable heroes in that kind. Like Achilles (though without his justification) Satan prides himself on his obduracy, his 'fixed mind / And high disdain, from sense of injured merit' (1.97–8); and like Aeneas he escapes from a flaming city to seek a better kingdom. The *Iliad* pattern develops through several flyting matches (epic taunts), single combats, and epic battle scenes in heaven in which Satan, unlike Achilles, is ignominiously defeated. The *Aeneid* pattern continues through Satan's adventures and successful conquest in Eden, though (unlike Aeneas) he can find no new homeland because he brings hell

with him everywhere: 'my self am hell' (4.75). The epic-of-wrath paradigm culminates in Satan's self-designed scene of epic triumph in Book 10, a triumph which turns to abject humiliation as Satan and his followers are abruptly transformed to serpents, enduring the thirst of a Tantalus in the Virgilian underworld.

Intersecting with this paradigm is that of the quest epic, which extends to include romance, the quintessential quest form. Milton incorporates a 'mini-Odyssey' into his epic as Satan is measured against the crafty Odysseus. The *Odyssey* pattern begins as Satan sets forth on his journey to earth through Chaos; it develops in Chaos and Eden as he continually proves himself a skilled rhetorician and a master of disguises (Steadman 1968, 194–208); and it finds completion when he returns to hell in Book 10, liberating his wife and son (Sin and Death) from captivity by his notable victory. But unlike Odysseus, whose entire adventure is a journey home, Satan at the very outset of his travels (in Book 2) is reunited with, but ironically fails to recognize, his reprehensible daughter–wife Sin, and the hideous offspring of their incestuous union, Death. And the honour they accord him at his return to hell in Book 10 soon gives way to the universal hiss of his followers turned into snakes.

Again, Milton's poem incorporates the basic narrative paradigm of romance: the continual wandering and multiple quests of knights-errant, as their ultimate goals or principal quests are almost indefinitely postponed or only partially achieved (Parker). In Satan and the fallen angels this romance paradigm is perverted as the wandering (intellectual and physical) becomes an absolute. In hell the fallen angels explore the hardest philosophical questions – 'Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute' – but find 'no end, in wandering mazes lost' (2.560–1). And instead of a wandering wood or labyrinthine landscape, Satan in Chaos traverses 'a dark / Illimitable ocean without bound, / Without dimension' (2.891–3), where he has no control whatsoever over his own motions or directions but 'swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies' (2.950) as he can, subjected entirely to the winds of chance.

Certain of Satan's adventures are specifically associated with episodes in particular romances or romantic epics, but again we recognize the perversions. Spenser's Red Crosse Knight defeats the serpent Error and (at last) the serpentine Duessa, but Satan embraces the Spenserian allegorical monsters he meets (Sin and Death) as his own progeny. Satan's journey to the Paradise of Fools is a darker version of Astolfo's journey to the Limbo of Vanities in Ariosto; however Satan comes on no rescue mission but because he is himself the source of all the vanities soon to be housed in that place. In

Eden, Satan perverts all the familiar romance roles of knights in gardens of love, for he cannot win love there, nor find sensual delight, nor enjoy sensuous refreshment: instead he sees 'undelightd all delight' (4.286) and feels more intensely than before the agony of his own loneliness, lovelessness, and unsatisfied desire. A perverse Guyon (*Faerie Queene* 2. Canto 12), he destroys in Eden not a wantonly sinful but a joyously innocent Bower of Bliss and Love. In Book 10 this romance paradigm also finds its fitting resolution, as Satan – a truly perverse St George – does not slay but turns into the dragon.

Milton also incorporates the paradigms of several forms of tragedy. Satan enacts at the outset a parodic version of heroic tragedy, portraying himself in Book 1, with particular reference to Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, as the noble and indomitable victim of an irrational, tyrannical, and wrathful God (Werblowsky). But Satan himself admits that he was motivated to rebel by pride and ambition – not, like Prometheus, by an intention to benefit mankind. Satan's great soliloquy on Mount Niphates (4.32–113) casts him briefly as a Faustean tragic hero, voicing the spiritual agonies of the damned soul and forced to acknowledge his guilt – his paradigmatic scene of suffering, as John Steadman notes (1976, 103–4). In subsequent soliloquies in Book 4 Satan takes on first the posture of the villain hero driven by ambition (a Macbeth or a Richard III), and at length that of an Elizabethan revenge hero – a Barrabas or an Iago wracked with envy and jealousy, devising plots and exulting in evil plans: 'O fair foundation laid whereon to build / Their ruin!' (4.521). However, as he sets his revenge plot in motion in Book 9, he perverts the usual Elizabethan paradigm, for he cannot harm his true enemy, God, and the human beings he ravages have done him no wrong whatsoever.

When Satan imbrutes himself in the serpent he recognizes how radically he is reversing the usual tragic paradigm. He is not felled by fate or his own *hamartia* for seeking to soar above humanity; rather he here chooses to sink far below it:

O foul descent! That I who erst contended
 With gods to sit the highest, am now constrained
 Into a beast, and mixed with bestial slime,
 This essence to incarnate and imbrute,
 That to the highth of deity aspired;
 But what will not ambition and revenge
 Descend to? (9.163–9)

He also sees clearly that the revenge he seeks must be self-destructive:

'Revenge, at first though sweet, / Bitter ere long back on it self recoils' (9.171–2). Satan has now moved outside both the classical and Elizabethan paradigms of tragedy, since for him there can be no catharsis of any kind, not even the release of meeting the worst at last, but only a continual declining and falling. At last, when Satan's involuntary transformation into a serpent in Book 10 makes him the butt of scorn and derision, we see God rewriting the Satanic revenge tragedy as black comedy.

By contrast with Satan's parodic revenge tragedy, Milton devised the Fall of Adam and Eve to conform to Aristotle's prescriptions for the best kind of classical tragedy (Aristotle; Steadman 1976). The plot involves a change in the protagonists' fortunes from happiness to misery, precisely articulated in Adam's outcry – 'O miserable of happy!' (10.720). As Aristotle recommended, the protagonists are persons better than ourselves who fall through *hamartia* (in this case, culpable errors of judgment); and the plot is complex, developed through several highly dramatic scenes: the marital dispute, the two temptations, reactions to the Fall (9.192–10.862). There are several *peripeteia* (reversals) with attendant tragic ironies. There is an explicit *anagnorisis* (discovery) when Adam and Eve awaken from their lust-induced sleep and realize their loss: 'good lost, and evil got . . . naked thus, of honour void, / Of innocence, of faith, of purity' (9.1072–5). And there is a long scene of suffering as Adam and Eve voice shame, fear, guilt, remorse, torments of conscience, and mutual recriminations, culminating with Adam's poignant complaint, prostrate and paralyzed by despair, 'from deep to deeper plunged' (10.844).

At this point, the Aristotelian tragic paradigm gives way to the paradigm of Christian tragedy, drawn essentially from the Book of Revelation. Catastrophes in this paradigm are not averted: like Christ himself, the elect suffer trials, sicknesses, catastrophes, deaths, martyrdoms, but they are enabled through grace to endure their suffering in patience and to wait in faith and hope for the reversal which will occur only at the Apocalypse (King). In Milton's poem the turn from classical to Christian tragedy is the literary manifestation of the action of grace: God works a reversal by clothing Adam and Eve's physical and spiritual nakedness; and Eve's act of begging Adam's forgiveness does so on the human plane, restoring the community of human love. God's directive to Michael concerning the emotional state he is to induce in Adam and Eve defines precisely the catharsis appropriate to this new Christian tragedy: Adam and Eve are to go forth from the Garden, and we from the poem, 'not disconsolate', 'sorrowing, yet in peace' (11.113–17).

The lyric and discursive genres are present in Milton's epic through

another strategy of inclusion. Rhetorical and dialogic kinds are embedded in *Paradise Lost*: rhetorical speeches in the three classical genres (judicial, deliberative, demonstrative); several kinds of dialogue (Platonic, Boethian, biblical); and also formal debates. These embedded discursive genres engage us in careful discriminations concerning the uses and the perversions of speech and language. Also, many lyrics are embedded in the narrative, set off by specific generic conventions, signals of commencement and closure, and integrity of structure, tone, and subject matter. Milton's epic employs a much more complete spectrum of lyrics, for a larger array of purposes, and in a more complex and conscious way, than does any previous epic. The Bard voices many apostrophes, four hymnic proems (to Books 1, 3, 7, and 9), and an epithalamium, 'Hail wedded love' (4.750–5). Satan and the fallen angels often fall into laments but cannot sustain them long, and they can only pervert lyrics of praise. The angels celebrate all divine activities with hymnic praises, but they produce their most elaborate and most exalted hymns when divine love and divine creativity are manifested (3.372–415; 7.182–91; 7.565–73; 7.602–32). And prelapsarian and postlapsarian man and woman exhibit their psychological and spiritual states through a great variety of odes, love lyrics, laments, complaints, prayers, and hymns, the most elaborate and eloquent of which is their magnificent morning hymn of praise (5.160–208). In *Paradise Lost* characters reveal their natures and their values through the lyrics they devise.

To illustrate how some of these embedded lyric forms function in Milton's epic, we might examine the rich significances which attach to Adam and Eve's love lyrics and laments. Eve devised the first love lyric in prelapsarian Eden, an exquisite, rhetorically complex, sonnet-like poem of eighteen lines, celebrating the sweetness and beauty of Eden through elaborate patterns of repetition, and building to the final half-line which proclaims Adam the essence of Eden for Eve:

With thee conversing I forget all time,
 All seasons and their change, all please alike.
 Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
 With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun
 When first on this delightful land he spreads
 His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
 Glistering with dew; fragrant the fertile earth
 After soft showers; and sweet the coming on
 Of grateful evening mild, then silent night
 With this her solemn bird and this fair moon,

And these the gems of heaven, her starry train:
 But neither breath of morn when she ascends
 With charm of earliest birds, nor rising sun
 On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, flower,
 Glistering with dew, nor fragrance after showers,
 Nor grateful evening mild, nor silent night
 With this her solemn bird, nor walk by moon,
 Or glittering starlight without thee is sweet. (4.639–56)

Lovely as this is, Adam's *aubade* or dawn song (5.16–22) is presented as a finer love poem, characterized by vibrant imagery, freer form, more intense feeling; verbal echoes identify it as a prototype of the Bridegroom's song to the Bride (Song of Sol. 2: 10–13), often said to be the most exquisite of all love songs (Lewalski 1979, 67):

Awake

My fairest, my espoused, my latest found,
 Heaven's last best gift, my ever new delight,
 Awake, the morning shines, and the fresh field
 Calls us; we lose the prime, to mark how spring
 Our tended plants, how blows the citron grove,
 What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed,
 How nature paints her colours, how the bee
 Sits on the bloom extracting liquid sweet. (5.17–25)

But in the fallen world the situation is reversed: Adam inaugurates the tragic lament-complaint while Eve transforms and perfects that kind. Adam voices several tragic lyrics: desperate laments for what is lost, and bitter complaints seeking some remedy or relief. His first sight of the fallen Eve evokes an anguished interior lament for her ruin and for the bleakness of life without her, 'O fairest of creation, last and best / Of all God's works . . .' (9.896–916). His longest 'sad complaint' which begins 'O miserable of happy! Is this the end / Of this new glorious world' (10.720–844), vainly seeks relief in outcries, apostrophes, and agonized questions. In structure and tone, Adam's tragic lyrics most closely resemble such classical models as Ovid's *Heroides*, culminating in despair.

By contrast, Eve inaugurates a better kind of tragic lyric, the true archetype of the penitential psalms in substance and in structure. Echoing especially Psalms 38, 51, and 102, her prayer to Adam for forgiveness fully expresses the misery, grief, and agony of the fallen condition, but also voices repentance for sin, desire to make amends, hope of reconciliation:

abundant life of the highest orders of being, the angels and most especially God, through the mixture and multiplicity of the genres and modes associated with them. And he indicates humankind's potential for growth and development both in the prelapsarian and the postlapsarian state as Adam and Eve take on the languages and the life-styles pertaining to one after another of the literary genres and modes.

The mixture and multiplicity of literary forms in Milton's epic are an index of its comprehensiveness and vitality. As cultural signposts common to author and reader, they also provide an important key to the interpretation of *Paradise Lost*. No poet has ever exploited them more extensively and more deliberately than Milton.

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