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An Introduction Justifying Queer Ways

WILL STOCKTON

In *Tetrachordon*, Milton resoundingly rejects as “crabbed” Augustine’s opinion “that manly friendship in all other regards had bin a more becoming solace for Adam, then to spend so many secret years in an empty world with one woman” (1032-33).¹ The relationship of husband and wife, Milton explains (echoing other Protestant writers on marriage), affords more “peculiar comfort[s]” of “company” than those of “the genial bed”: “in no company so well as where the differente sexe in most resembling unlikeness, and most unlike resemblance cannot but please best and be pleas’d in the aptitude of that variety” (1033).² The chiasmus of “most resembling unlikeness, and most unlike resemblance” locates the frictions of sexual difference at the center of marital desire and its satisfactions. Yet when Adam, in *Paradise Lost*, asks God for “fellowship . . . / . . . fit to participate / All rational delight” (8.389-91), does he expect God to create another man?³ Adam’s citation of the “Lion with Lioness” (8.393) as one of creation’s fit “pairs” (8.394) suggests that he understands his “human consort” (8.392) will be female – a being whom he, asleep, sees God fashion as “Manlike, but different sex” (8.471). Feminist criticism of Milton’s epic has nonetheless differed sharply over whether God actually delivers the being for which Adam tells Raphael he asked, and the being that Adam claims God promised: “Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self, / Thy wish *exactly* to thy hearts desire” (8.450-51, emphasis added).

Rehearsing the many conclusions of both prosecutorial and apologetic readings of Milton’s Eve is not necessary, I hope, to make the queer suggestion that Adam’s request for companionship stems from a desire audible as homoerotic.⁴ Adam articulates his request for a companion in the discourse of friendship, classically understood as a same-sex relationship among social and intellectual equals.⁵ Seeking “Collateral love, and dearest amitie” (8.425), he asks God, “Among unequals what societie / Can sort, what harmonie or true delight” (8.383-84)? He stresses sameness as he asks God to grant him “Like of his like” (8.423), a copy of himself with whom he can make other copies. He says nothing about the lioness’s subordination or inferiority to, or otherwise meaningful difference from, the lion. Recalling for the reader Eve’s poolside education in the difference between Adam and her reflection in the water – a story that begins with Eve’s own observation that Adam “Like consort to [him]self canst no where find” (4.448) – Adam asks for another version of himself whose degree of difference thereafter becomes a subject of his education. The fact that Adam tells this story to Raphael, whose company Adam admits to relishing (8.210-16), and once Eve has taken leave of the conversation, suggests that Adam’s present difficulties

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negotiating sexual difference both prompt and retroject his wish for friendship. Riven by his understanding of himself as, as well as his current desire to be, Eve's superior, and, as he subsequently confesses, by his companionate but conflicting sense that Eve "so absolute . . . seems / And in her self compleat" (8.547-48), Adam (one historian among many in the poem) arguably reconstructs his initial desire for a consort as a desire ignorant of the difference sexual difference makes. Worries over the relationship between subordination and inferiority, over degrees of similitude among humans, are symptomatically absent in Adam's "initial" request for another version of himself: a homo.

Here at the outset of several essays that collectively seek to justify – that is, to make a case for the critical rightness of while simultaneously producing – queer readings of Milton's work, I would like to suggest that Milton's most famous effort, *Paradise Lost*, raises but does not foreclose a set of queer possibilities for the sexual "orientations" of Adam and Eve. I intend this suggestion as part of my own brief, introductory take on the relative paucity of queer criticism about a poet who focuses his epic-to-end-all-epics on the story of the first "heterosexual" couple (Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve), but who endows each partner with palpable, entirely extra-Biblical homoerotic longing. Certainly this critical paucity has much to do with what Drew Daniel describes in his contribution as the conservative "tenor of Milton scholarship," with its "constitutive anxiety about 'ruining the sacred truths' and [its] vexed awareness of the watchful paternal gaze of an authorial super-ego." Howsoever patriarchal, Milton's championship of companionate, heterosexual marriage in the divorce tracts and *Paradise Lost* ranks high among these sacred truths threatened by any queer outing of Adam and Eve as homosexuals. At the risk of ruination, I would nonetheless like to proceed with the possibility that Adam and Eve are not in fact heterosexuals, if by that anachronistic term we mean people whose desire tends primarily toward the "opposite" sex.⁶

Alternative possibilities for Adam and Eve's sexual orientations consolidate in the poem under the sign of the homo. For modern readers, this sign includes the homosexual as an equally anachronistic designation for a person whose sexual desire tends primarily toward members of the same sex. As I derive the expanded term from Leo Bersani, however, homoeroticism also marks an erotic orientation toward sameness, including self-sameness, or the appearance of being without a constitutive lack healed only in a dyadic relationship.⁷ Adam's attraction to Raphael, who admits to no crippling sense of self-alienation, provides one example of such homoerotic attraction, as does Adam's attraction to (expressed as awe of) God as "One" (8.421) without "deficiency found" (8.416). Doubtless the most critically discussed example of homoeroticism in the poem is Eve's attraction to the aquatic reflection of herself that she does not know lacks the "depth" that now so ubiquitously metaphorizes subjectivity. But another example of the same homoerotic orientation is Adam's otherwise heterosexual perception of Eve as "in her self compleat." Raphael's reply to this confession with a lecture on male self-esteem entirely misses the point that Adam has been trying to make to this comparatively self-complete "man" about human deficiency and the need for amity. Whether because Adam will not allow her to or she is truly

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not fit to, Eve has not satisfied Adam's doubly homoerotic and contradictory desires: for an equal to "solace his defects" (8.419) and for a companion who is not defective.

Persistently frustrating Adam and Eve's homoerotic desires in *Paradise Lost* is a Neoplatonic ontology of the human as constitutionally incomplete, divided in half with the other half to be found across a sexual divide that is also a slope. In the form of "one flesh" heterosexual sociality that Adam and Eve should model according to, among others, Adam himself, each lacks the companionship of the other with whom each also exists in a hierarchal relationship. Adam and Eve are each other's "other half" (4.488), in Adam's words, and he is "her Head" (8.574), in Raphael's.⁸ As Bersani argues, however, homoeroticism contains within it a "potentially revolutionary inaptitude . . . for sociality as it is known."⁹ If, from the prosecutorial perspective on Eve, the Son most concisely articulates sociality as it is known in *Paradise Lost* when he tells Adam that "God set thee above her made of thee / And for thee, whose perfection farr excell'd / Hers in all real dignitie" (10.148-51), then the homoerotic desires Adam and Eve nevertheless articulate mark the first couple's potentially revolutionary inaptitude for a divinely prescribed heterosocial life. These desires suggest that like Bersani's homos, Adam and Eve might, even before the fall *and without falling* (an event that hinges only and always only on violating that "One easie prohibition" [4.433] against eating from the Tree of Life), make "the politically unacceptable and politically indispensable choice of an outlaw existence."¹⁰

Let us speculate – for what is the poem itself if not a grand act of speculation, one that repeatedly calls attention to its own speculative status?¹¹ An Adam and Eve who never turn themselves into the law might never become a couple. An outlaw Adam might still long for the "fellowship" God reportedly promised but never delivered. Or – a conjunction that, in Miltonic contexts, as Peter Herman has taught us, also carries the sense of *and* – he might refuse the misogynistic construction of Eve as his inferior.¹² An outlaw Eve might refuse to frame retroactively her first experience of desire as narcissistically "vain" (4.466). Her desire might tend more toward what we now call lesbianism, if not, even more so than the lonely Adam's, toward autoerotism. After all, Eve's account of learning how "beauty is excelld by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair" (4.490-91) testifies *not* to her successful conversion away from an image she must be told "is thy self" (4.468), but instead to the *failure* of that conversion. Eve is so scarcely convinced by the lesson about proper image reflection and other halves that she feels compelled to rehearse it in all its painful detail. These details include her initial turning away from Adam and back toward the pool. They include Adam's proprietary interpellation of her as an individual – not one-in-one but half-in-one – part of himself: "Henceforth an individual solace dear; / Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee *claim* / My other halP" (4.486-88). And they include Adam's supplementation of his proprietary claim with taming force: his "gentle hand / Seisd" hers (4.488-89, emphasis added). Given that Eve's story of sexual conversion makes up the bulk of her very first speech in the poem, one might wonder how often she tells it. How much time has passed since she "yielded" (4.489) and began learning her lesson in heterosocialization? How much time will

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have to pass before she no longer feels the need to rehearse this lesson? How long before her outlaw desire will so succumb to the law of manly grace's superiority to female beauty that the desire itself will disappear and the law itself will need no articulation?

We know that Satan recognizes the incompleteness of Eve's heterosocialization because he tempts her with the promise that by eating from a tree he slyly tropes as the feminine "Mother of Science" (9.680), she too will possess the cognitive faculties necessary "not onely to discern / Things in thir Causes, but to trace the wayes / Of highest Agents, deemd however wise" (9.681-83). In other words, she will be "fit to participate / All rational delight" with Adam, and then some. The possibility that Eve may already be as perfectly fit as Adam, and that she is only told otherwise by the misogynists around her, is one point on which a queer reading can build on a feminist one. In this queer reading, Satan tempts Eve with her persistent homoerotic attraction to a reflection of self that she has not been permitted to possess. Although sexual difference remains caught in a hierarchical frame, such that Eve will become wiser than Adam, it is both to Eve's queer credit that she succumbs to this temptation and all the more tragic that she regrets it. Her temptation evinces that her homoerotic attraction to a self undefined by lack retains a psychic priority in her with respect to the hierarchical heterosexual relationship she is currently in that degrades her as the inferior partner.

Adam, too, eventually makes an outlaw choice and regrets it. Yet he does not predicate his choice on a rejection of the doctrine of other halves he previously and literally espoused. Quite the contrary: this doctrine, he feels, compels his disobedience:

So forcible within my heart I feel
The Bond of Nature draw me to my owne,
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
Our State cannot be severd, we are one,
One Flesh; to loose thee were to loose my self. (9.955-59)

Confounded in his desire once again, Adam voices the frictional principles of marital sameness ("we are one") and possession ("my owne"), and his fall only exacerbates the misogyny entwined in this belief in dyadic self-completion through wedded property. In book ten Adam viciously laments that God did not "fill the World at once / With Men as Angels without Feminine" (10.892-93). Adam is wrong, according to the narrator, about angelic sex. Angels are neither men nor women; they "either Sex assume, or both" (1.424). Presuming the narrator is right, and that Raphael and Michael serve as angelic spokes"men" on issues of sex and gender, the reason all angels assume male form in the poem, however, may well have something to do with the angels' own misogyny. Educating Adam in future history, Michael manifests this misogyny somewhat schizophrenically by attributing death to "th' inabstinence of Eve" (11.476) and then turning on Adam when Adam, as if trying to repeat the lesson of his teacher, attributes "the tenor of Mans woe" (11.632) to "Woman" (11.633). The attribution for this woe then

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properly belongs, Michael says, recalling the Son's claim that Adam "did'st resign [his] Manhood" (10.148), to "Mans effeminate slackness . . . / . . . who should better hold his place / By wisdom and superiour gifts receav'd" (11.634-36). Responsibility for the fall, the reader may gather, lies not with Eve, except when it does. And it lies not with Adam, except when it does because he is insufficiently manly.

Perhaps most crucial to any attempt at a summary accounting of *Paradise Lost's* final word on sexual relationality is the fact that Michael gets his own final word about Eve wrong. He instructs Adam to "waken Eve" (12.594), implying that she is asleep, but Adam finds her "wak't" (12.608). If Michael gets this most basic of facts wrong, how much more likely is it that, from the skeptical perspective the reader may occupy in regards to this highly speculative poem, Michael gets his already confused prescription of misogynistic heterosexuality wrong too? Moreover, if Michael's factual wrongs as an angel point upward to what many readers, including most recently Peter Herman and Michael Bryson, have argued is the poem's profound unease with its own representation of God, how much more likely is it that the doctrine of heterosexual misogyny that Raphael, Michael, the Son, Adam, and even Eve preach is entirely fabricated as part and parcel of God's perhaps tyrannical strategy of human subjectivization?¹³ How much more likely is it, in short, that the paradise actually lost in the poem is one in which Adam and Eve had the chance to decouple sexual difference from sexual hierarchy and live their lives as sexual outlaws while *still* not breaking that one easy prohibition, that silly little rule about fruit eating, that is the only hard and fast law God has given them – the only law whose violation could get them ejected from Eden?

II

To allow for the possibility that Adam and Eve's relationship need not have lapsed into misogynistic and proprietary heterosexuality, to claim that the poem explores the possibility for different outcomes, and sets up the possibility for counterfactual histories, is not necessarily, or not simply, to join with the apologists in framing this form of heterosexuality as the object of Milton's critique.¹⁴ It is to reframe the poem itself as an open-ended exploration of multiple forms of sexuality – a queer exploration because it entertains the disjunction of sexual desire from the divine prescriptions and narrative teleology that ostensibly govern it. Queer, here, does not simply mean non-normative, nor can it be divorced from perversions of sex and gender.¹⁵ Queerness tracks anti-heteronormative modes of desire, embodiment, and affect. The queer readings in this issue of *Early Modern Culture* thereby extend previous lines of inquiry – many of them feminist, a few explicitly gay or queer – into the unstable formations of gender and sexuality in Milton's work. I have implicitly drawn, for instance, on the long critical conversation about Eve's poolside dalliance that includes James Holstun's reading of it as a demonstration of "the passage of lesbian desire into an inarticulate silence."¹⁶

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Writing in 1987, slightly before the queer turn in Early Modern Studies, Holstun does not use the word *queer*, but the word nonetheless accommodates his claim that Adam and Eve's relationship "registers [lesbianism's] continuing repressed presence."¹⁷ Same-sex attraction is also the object of the first (I think) markedly queer reading of Milton: Gregory Bredbeck's argument that *Paradise Regain'd* declines an easy exegetical opportunity to condemn sodomy and admits desire's homoerotic pull through Satan's temptation of the Son with "Tall stripling youths" (2.352).¹⁸ More of this past work is worth surveying for the sake of beginning to chart the genealogy of queer Milton criticism to which this issue makes a sustained contribution. Of course, this chart will be incomplete, even as the essays that follow supplement it with their own critical engagements.

Miltonic queerness *qua* homoeroticism is not confined to the two epics. Some of Milton's early work addresses male same-sex desire, too. Focusing on the "unexpressive nuptial Song" (176) heard by the sinking Lycidas, Bruce Boehrer has read Milton's poem about Edward King as a homoerotic epithalamion.¹⁹ In an essay entitled "Milton's Queer Choice," Ross Leasure has argued that the libertine god presents as much of a sexual threat to the brothers as to the Lady.²⁰ Milton's friendship with Charles Diodati has also attracted considerable biographical speculation. The friendship prompted verse that, according to Milton, was an inadequate form of conveyance for the intensity of his love:

Carmine scire velis quàm te redamémque colámque,
Crede mihi vix hoc carmine scire queas.
Nam neque noster amor modulis includitur arctis,
Nec venit ad claudos integer ipse pedes. ("Elegia sexta," 5-8)

[If you do want to learn through my verse how warmly I love you, how dearly I cherish you, that, believe me, you won't learn through this song, for my love cannot be bound in tight-fitting metrics, and, being healthy, does not come to you on limping elegiac feet.]

Partly on the basis of such verse, John T. Shawcross has concluded that Diodati was a homosexual, while Milton possessed a "latent homosexuality that was probably repressed consciously (as well as subconsciously) from being overt, except *perhaps* with Diodati."²¹ Another recent biographer, Anna Beer, is more psychologically circumspect. She does not deny the homoerotic connection between the two men, but draws instead on scholarship about male friendship in the Renaissance to identify their love as one that "can provide unique intellectual and spiritual," if not necessarily sexual, "fulfillment."²²

Whether or to what extent Milton was a homosexual is a question that most self-identified queer critics would cast as beside the point. The awkward clinicalism of "latent homosexuality" should remind us that this question is an anachronistic one anyway. The queer point – or one of them, at least – is the more deconstructive one that heteroerotic and homoerotic, normative and perverse, desires frequently intertwine, sometimes switching places, sometimes dissolving

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the difference between themselves. One of the more familiar sites of temptation for this queer, deconstructive criticism, and the subject of Stephen Guy-Bray's essay in this issue, is Raphael's answer to Adam's question in *Paradise Lost* about how angels "thir Love / Express" (8.615-16):

Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
(And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
In eminence, and obstacle find none
Of membrane, joynt, or limb, exclusive barrs:
Easier then Air with Air, if Spirits embrace,
Total they mix, Union of Pure with Pure
Desiring; nor retrain'd conveyance need
As Flesh to mix with Flesh, or Soul with Soul. (8.622-629)

This answer raises a host of questions. How "pure" are Adam and Eve, and are they less pure now than when they were first created? Does Raphael know how Adam and Eve have sex? (The conditional "whatever" suggests he may not.) Do Adam and Eve have sex, and what does that sex look like: is it a conjunction of flesh or the soul, or some combination of both?²³ Is it procreative, and does procreation have to be the primary purpose of sex? Considering that neither the apparent sex of one's partner nor monogamous commitments apparently bound angelic sex, and that Raphael imagines Adam and Eve possibly evolving "to Spirit" (5.497), is monogamous, married, heterosexual sex really the only form of human sexual expression the poem endorses? Considering that all the angels appear to humans as men, does Milton authorize us to envision heaven as a gay orgy? Do we need his authorization? Is Guy-Bray right to argue, as he does here, that the poem is at some level actually promoting sodomy, or non-reproductive sex between men or unsexed beings?

In his *Preface to Paradise Lost*, C.S. Lewis reacted to Raphael's description of angelic sex with the assurance that Milton had no homosexual agenda, although he certainly overstepped the boundaries of good taste:

The trouble is, I think, that since these exalted creatures are all spoken of by masculine pronouns, we tend, half consciously, to think that Milton is attributing to them a life of homosexual promiscuity. That he was poetically imprudent in raising a matter which invites such a misconception I do not deny; but the real meaning is certainly not filthy, and certainly not foolish. As angels do not die, they need not breed. They are therefore not sexed in the human sense at all. An Angel is, of course, always He (not She) in human language, because whether the male is, or is not, the superior sex, the masculine is certainly the superior gender.²⁴

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This misogynistic defense of Milton's hetero credentials ("the masculine is certainly the superior gender") hardly resolves the erotic possibilities that Raphael's account of angelic sex presents. Helping set the ideologically stabilizing agenda of what Herman describes as the dominant paradigm of Milton criticism now exemplified by Stanley Fish's argument that the poem disciplines its reader's errors, Lewis insists on a "real meaning" that forecloses the queer (filthy, foolish) one Guy-Bray perceives. Guy-Bray is not alone in his perverse reading, however, nor, as the queer version of Milton's one just man, would he necessarily be wrong if he were. Jonathan Goldberg has read Raphael's account of angelic sex as "undeniably homo" – and "where likeness is sameness," where "the hierarchies that rank angels . . . are completely absent."²⁵ Looking to the future, Raphael's account also anticipates a time when, according to Goldberg, "all will be all and differences will no longer obtain."²⁶ I would add only that the "perhaps" and "may" in Raphael's evolutionary forecast ("perhaps / Your bodies may at last turn all to Spirit" [5.496- 97]) suggest the limits of the angel's knowledge about divine will and the nature of human beings, including human sexuality. The angel might be wrong about human evolution, as well as about the differences that divide male and female. He might be wrong that Eve is "Less excellent" (8.566) than Adam. By Raphael's own patriarchal standards that place men on top, the sex Adam and Eve are already having may already be homo – a mutual mixture of selves that is, when measured against the angel's prescription, queer.

In a recent article, Karma deGruy follows Goldberg in arguing for the need to critically displace human bodies – caught between the fallen binaries of male and female, superior and inferior – from the center of the poem's focus on gender and sexuality. By "rescuing erotic desire from the realm of the fallen and fleshy" through the model of the angels, deGruy maintains, "Milton does go some way toward . . . envision[ing] a world in which the 'female' and the 'fleshy' are perhaps not always locked into a hierarchically inferior position relative to the 'male' and the 'spiritual'."²⁷ For our purposes here, DeGruy's summary finding that for Milton "paradise meant possibility," coupled with Guy-Bray's argument that the poem promotes sodomy, implies yet another justification for queering Milton beyond the imaginative recovery of prelapsarian and angelic erotic possibilities.²⁸ Linking poetic envisioning to more "practical" enactment, queer Milton criticism may also work to resist the postlapsarian consignment of these possibilities to the realm of the lost. Queer Milton criticism, that is, may locate *Paradise Lost* and Milton's other work in a class of Renaissance texts that James Bromley argues foreground "failures of intimacy" – failures to the extent that their instructions about how to desire do not coalesce around the monogamous, heterosexual couple. "Empowering readers to reimagine their own erotic lives," Bromley contends, many Renaissance "literary texts offer a counterdiscourse to the period's marital advice and conduct books and other texts that attempt to naturalize the consolidation of intimacy around monogamous coupling." Crucial for the purpose of extending this thesis to Milton's work is Bromley's claim that this "counterdiscourse is present even when texts ostensibly demonize alternative forms of intimacy, as a greater flexibility in Renaissance narrative allowed readers to resist what appears to be a textual foreclosure on transgressive intimate

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practices.”²⁹ Throughout his poetry and his prose, Milton contends with competing discourses of erotic intimacy that the reader, both Renaissance and modern, can seize upon to resist the sex education lesson ostensibly proffered. Queers, after all, have long had to resist sex education programs that demonize their forms of erotic life, that associate these forms of life with depression, suicide, disease, and, of course, a violation of God’s will.

Read for its counterdiscourses of intimacy, *Paradise Lost* becomes a poem that, at times the reader may choose to privilege, celebrates non-monogamous erotic encounters between multiple unsexed or all-male beings. It allows that Adam and Eve’s relationship might have been a truly egalitarian one rather than an alternatively brutal and gently misogynistic one. And, to be sure, it allows that their relationship may still be such an egalitarian one – that “hand in hand” (12.648) equality may lie in their future as well.³⁰ It allows, too, that Adam might have been happier in Eden with Steve rather than Eve, and asks the reader to consider whether this homoerotic desire is necessarily tethered to a misunderstanding of sexual difference. It imagines an Eve who, no inferior to Adam, also might have been happier with another woman, if not alone with herself. It imagines sex, lots of it, and lots of different kinds of it, and not all of it, or any of it, procreative. And it rejects all attempts to foreclose these possibilities as efforts to “straighten out” a poem whose pleasures result from its indulgence in and entertainment of desires it does not succeed in disciplining.

Uninfluenced by this introduction, the essays that follow take their own solitary yet still companionate queer ways. In “‘Fellowships of Joy’: Angelic Union in *Paradise Lost*,” the essay I already previewed the most here, Stephen Guy-Bray argues that Milton’s poem privileges not reproductive heterosexuality, which is associated with Satan, Sin and Death, but rather “an unproductive and ultimately ungendered sexuality that we can only call queer.” For Guy-Bray, Milton’s representation of angelic sex develops the Renaissance discourse of male friendship as the highest form of affective bonding – a discourse also structuring the poem’s long conversation between Adam and Raphael. Marriage between men and women is at best a metaphorical approximation of this more perfect form of same-sex union, which, in the period, is also recognizable as sodomy. Guy-Bray’s method of queering Milton is thus, in part, one of inversion: transforming the poet into a proponent of a form of sexuality widely regarded as sinful, and remaking Milton as a poet who himself reinvents sin as the most perfect form of sexual expression.

In “Eros and Anteros: Queer Mutuality in Milton’s *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*,” David Orvis directly challenges the assumption, upon which I relied at the beginning of this introduction, that same-sex friendship provides Milton with the model of relationality that underwrites an ideal heterosexual marriage. Orvis argues that Milton’s Anteros does not represent friendship, as critics have traditionally interpreted him; nor is Anteros simply identical to, or distinct from, Eros. As Orvis traces the relationship between Eros and Anteros from classical to modern culture, he finds it tangled up in a confusion of mistaken identities and allegorical and anti-allegorical readings. Drawing on a formulation of queerness as that which opposes coherent sexual signification, Orvis argues that Milton uses

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this confusion to configure marriage as a potential threat to a form of love that has no name – a love whose queerness lies in its ineffability, in the fact that it can only be defined by what it is not.

Instead of turning Milton into a champion of queerness, the next two essays take seriously Milton's hostility to the queer – queering Milton by exploring, in the first case, his flight from rationality in his defense of chastity, and in the second case, his hero's provoking resemblance to the queer enemy. In "What Hath Night to Do with Sleep?: Bestial Sex and Human Temporality in *A Mask*," Melissa Sanchez draws on recent conversations about queer time (the relationship of queerness to chronological time and narratives of human development), as well as recent conversations in animal studies, to claim that the boundary between human and animal in *A Mask* is one of temporality, not ontology. Comus tempts the Lady with pleasure now – a pleasure she resists, and a temptation she endures, in the name of a marital chastity that preserves her humanity and prevents her transformation into a beast. Yet the Lady does not clearly win her argument with Comus, as the brothers interrupt the argument with their bungled rescue attempt. Chastity's ultimate defense, Sanchez deduces, lies beyond reason, in spiritual aid figured in the forms of Sabrina and the Attendant Spirit. This aid, in turn, undoes the very distinctions between human reason and animalistic passion underwriting the Lady's defense of chastity.

Drew Daniel's concluding essay, "Dagon as Queer Assemblage: Effeminacy and Terror in *Samson Agonistes*," enters the fray about Milton's endorsement of religious terrorism to posit that a resemblance between Samson as an emasculated male and Dagon as a monstrous hybrid or "queer assemblage" provokes Samson's razing of the Philistine temple. An expansive and meditative essay that weaves together Jasbir Puar's work on terrorism and early modernist work on effeminacy, "Dagon as Queer Assemblage" attends to the negative affects of shame and anxiety that most frequently characterize Milton's attitude toward queer sexualities and toward sodomy in particular. Evidence for Milton's anxious aversion to sodomy appears in his prose, where he further links it to forms of monstrous hybridity that Dagon materializes. (Whereas Guy-Bray's Milton "endorses" sodomy as non-reproductive sex, Daniel's Milton characterizes sodomy as frighteningly, demonically reproductive.) In a section on "the clash of civilizations" between Milton and queer studies, Daniel suggests that analyzing the manifestations and effects of this anxiety, including anxiety's transformation into terror, should be one objective of a queer Milton studies that seeks to do more than recover positive representations of homoerotic and other non-heteronormative relations.

Justifying queer ways of reading Milton, the essays that follow demonstrate particular analytical purchases the concept of queerness can make on just some recurrent questions in Milton studies. What forms does sex take among the angels and among humans before the fall? What is the relationship between friendship and marriage? What does Milton mean by chastity? Does *Samson Agonistes* endorse religious terrorism? Attending to these questions leads to dalliances with others. Is Milton's Christianity hostile to queer expression? Is it the task of the critic to make Milton's work ideologically coherent? And why has

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Milton Studies been so far relatively unaffected by the queer turn in Early Modern (especially Shakespeare) Studies? It is no accident, perhaps, that the five early modernists who collaborate here to raise questions about Milton's queerness are not, like our respondent Victoria Silver, principally Miltonists. For within Early Modern Studies, to twist Satan's famous observation, Milton Studies is its own place. For many of those on the inside, it is a heaven of devotees to the most profound English poet of the seventeenth century. For many of those on the outside, it is a hell of ideological conservatives who have made a career out of committing the intentional fallacy.³¹ Whether Milton Studies remains such a divided place depends in part on whether it can accommodate the queers.

Notes

1. All parenthetical references to Milton's works are taken from *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

2. On Milton's opinion about the companionate, rather than simply procreative, purpose of Eve's creation, see James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 105-06.

3. I have asked this question in a previous essay, "Adam and Eve and the Failure of Heterosexuality," *Queer Renaissance Historiography: Backward Gaze*, eds. Vin Nardizzi, Stephen Guy-Bray, and Will Stockton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 207-28. I conjectured in that essay that, when he made the request, Adam was unaware of "sexual hierarchy – the inequality that is, for Milton, fully constitutive of the difference between human men and women" (215). Assuming now that Milton's agenda in the poem is not so resolutely misogynistic, I would like to pose this question again in a way that holds open the possibility for Adam and Eve to practice various forms of "homosexuality."

4. I borrow the distinction between apologetic and prosecutorial readings from Karen Edwards, "Resisting Representation: All About Milton's Eve," *Exemplaria* 9.1 (1997): 231-53.

5. See Gregory Chaplin, "One Flesh, One Heart, One Soul: Renaissance Friendship and Miltonic Marriage," *Modern Philology* 99.2 (2001): 260-92; and Thomas H. Luxon, *Single Imperfection: Milton, Marriage, Friendship* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005).

6. On the problems that the concept of heterosexuality causes in understanding early modern forms of desire, see Rebecca Ann Bach, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literature Before Heterosexuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

7. Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). On "homo" as a term that connects like to like across chronological divides that ostensibly disallow these connections, see Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, "Queering History," *PMLA* 120.5 (2005): 1608-17.

8. On the tensions in and violent consequences of this one flesh model, see Frances E. Dolan, *Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

9. Bersani, *Homos*, 76 (original emphasis).

10. Bersani, *Homos*, 76.

11. This call begins with the narrator's bold but anxious invocation to the muse: "What in me is dark / Illumin" (1.22- 23), an illumination without which the poem is *mere* speculation. The invocation to book 3 is fraught with similar anxiety about the veracity of representation, as the narrator seeks to "see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight" (3.55-56). The description of Eden is speculative, too: "if Art could tell" (4.236).

12. See Peter C. Herman, "Paradise Lost, the Miltonic 'Or,' and the Poetics of Incertitude," in *Destabilizing Milton: Paradise Lost and the Poetics of Incertitude* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 43-59. The speculation in which I am indulging, as well as the queer challenges

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to the “sacred truths” I am encouraging, are broadly congruent with what Herman and others have described as the goal of the “New Milton Criticism” to recast Milton as a poet of uncertainty rather than certainty, of problem-raising rather than problem-solving. See Peter C. Herman and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *The New Milton Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

13. Peter C. Herman, “Incertitude, Authority, and Milton’s God,” in *Destabilizing Milton*, 107-25; Michael Bryson, *The Atheist Milton* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 93-107.

14. On the queerness of counterfactuals, see Kathryn Schwarz, “Queer Futility: Or, The Life and Death of *King John*,” *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Madhavi Menon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 167.

15. For a critique of the use of queerness as a synonym for non-normative, see Sharon Marcus, “Queer Theory for Everyone: A Review Essay,” *Signs* 31.1 (2005): 196-97; and my review of Madhavi Menon’s *Shakespeare*, “Shakespeare and Queer Theory,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63.2 (2012): 224-35.

16. James Holstun, “Will You Rent Our Ancient Love Asunder?: Lesbian Elegy in Donne, Marvell, and Milton,” *English Literary History* 54.4 (1987): 836.

17. Holstun, “Will You Rent Our Ancient Love Asunder?,” 837.

18. Gregory Bredbeck, “Milton’s Sodomite,” in *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 189-31. For a continuation of the discussion about the “Tall stripling youths,” see Philip Rollinson, “The Homoerotic Aspect of Temptation in *Paradise Regained*,” *English Language Notes* 32.2 (1995): 31-35; Claude J. Summers, “The (Homo)Sexual Tradition in Milton’s *Paradise Regained*,” *Reclaiming the Sacred: The Bible in Gay and Lesbian Culture*, ed. Raymond-Jean Frontain (New York: Haworth, 1997), 45-46; John T. Shawcross, “Milton’s *Paradise Regain’d* and the Second Temptation,” *ANQ* 21 (2008): 34-41; and David V. Urban, “The Homosexual Temptation of the Son in Milton’s *Paradise Regained*: A Reply to John T. Shawcross and Claude J. Summers,” *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2011/2012): 272-77 (www.connotations.uni-tuebingen.de/urban02123.htm).

19. Bruce Boehrer, “Lycidas’: The Pastoral Elegy as Same-Sex Epithalamium,” *PMLA* 117.2 (2002): 222-36.

20. Ross Leasure, “Milton’s Queer Choice: Comus at Castlehaven,” *Milton Quarterly* 36.2 (2002): 63-86.

21. John T. Shawcross, *John Milton: The Self and the World* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), 59 (original emphasis).

22. Anna Beer, *Milton: Poet, Pamphleteer, and Patriot* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 51. See also, along similar lines, John Rumrich, “The Erotic Milton,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 41.2 (1999): 128-41.

23. For the view that Adam and Eve do have bodily sex before the fall, see James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh*; and Peter Lindenbaum, “Lovemaking in Milton’s Paradise,” *Milton Studies* 6 (1974): 277-306. Kent R. Lenhof argues to the contrary in “Nor turnd I weene’: *Paradise Lost* and Pre-Lapsarian Sexuality,” *Milton Quarterly* 34.3 (2000): 67- 84; as does Thomas H. Luxon in “Milton’s Wedded Love,” in *Single Imperfection*, 123-56. In “How Human Life Began: Sexual Reproduction in Book 8 of *Paradise Lost*,” in *Sex Before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England*, eds. James Bromley and Will Stockton (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 263-90, however, Luxon argues that conversation, especially between Raphael and Adam and Adam and God, constitutes one mode of prelapsarian sex. Given queer theory’s interest in what constitutes sex in the first place, this question of what sex is prior to the ontological divisions and ruptures occasioned by the fall seems ripe for further queer inquiry.

24. C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to “Paradise Lost,”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 112-13.

25. Jonathan Goldberg, *The Seeds of Things: Theorizing Sexuality and Materiality in Renaissance Representations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 194.

26. Goldberg, *The Seeds of Things*, 195.

27. Karma deGruy, “Desiring Angels: The Angelic Body in *Paradise Lost*,” *Criticism* 54.1 (2012): 142.

28. deGruy, “Desiring Angels,” 43.

29. James M. Bromley, *Intimacy and Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2.

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30. See also Lee Morrissey's argument that Eve leads the way forward through a paradise they never actually leave because it is "within" (12.587); "Literature and the Postsecular: *Paradise Lost*?" *Religion & Literature* 41.3 (2009): 102-05.

31. Blackwell's *Companion to Aesthetics*, 2nd., ed. Stephen Davies et al. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2009) in fact cites *Paradise Lost* in its defense of the intentional fallacy: "Intention, though undoubtedly a psychological state, ceases to be unavailable to others because it can display itself in action: and since a literary work may be the product of a complex set of actions, it is unclear why we should not see its creator's intentions made manifest in it (as they clearly are in, say, Milton's *Paradise Lost*)" (369). Thanks to Ari Fiedlander for bringing this reference to my attention.