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Morphology of Chaos: Abjection and the Body in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario
September 29, 1999

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the implications of John Milton's placement of somatic processes in the Garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost*. Beginning with the Patristics, Augustine in particular, I trace the historical and theological debates around the way in which the body and its corporeal processes have been embedded in Paradise. I argue that the body is separated into two components: the corporeal and the incorporeal. The division of the body allows Milton to render the body admissible to Paradise since it allows him to displace the corporeal onto the feminine. This investigation is informed by Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, which reveals the interdependence of the corporeal and the incorporeal and the impossibility of their separation. In light of Kristeva's theory of abjection, I trace the emergence of the corporeal in *Paradise Lost* through Milton's representation of the abject and the Semiotic in his depictions of Chaos, sexuality and hunger.

Key Words: Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Kristeva, abject,

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of Elizabeth Harvey. Her sense of direction and excitement about the project was contagious. Thanks are also due to Nicholas Watson. His willingness to come on board with this project at a late date was both generous and amazingly helpful. My thesis committee, Paul Werstine, Fiona Somerset and Brian Patton, were kind with their comments and giving with their suggestions. My debt to my friend and mentor Amy Appleford is beyond repayment. Her ability to both ask questions and answer them enriched this project enormously. Finally, Dan Fockler's patience and understanding throughout this process were sustaining.

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Chapter I

"Take away death and body is good": Imagining the Paradisal Corpus

On the subject of sex in Paradise Roland Frye in *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts* states: "Corcoran finds relatively little precedence for Milton's description of the sexual life of Adam and Eve before the fall, and Knott finds little emphasis even on the mere repose of Adam and Eve in the earlier literary traditions" (280).[1] James Turner in *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* also remarks that Milton "is virtually unique in ascribing active eroticism, not only to the unfallen Adam and Eve, but to angels both fallen and unfallen" (53). According to these sources, there is a notable reluctance to write sex into the garden of Eden, yet Milton chooses to do precisely that in *Paradise Lost*. Not only does he explore the general topic of the human body and its functioning, but he devotes specific attention to sexuality both human and angelic. In this chapter I will consider both sex and hunger, because hunger, as an analogous bodily appetite, is often closely associated with, or ever conflated with, sexuality. I want to suggest that the reason that there is a reluctance by the Church Fathers to introduce active eroticism into Paradise is because of a recognition that to write sex into the Garden is a dangerous project for fallen creatures. Both sex and hunger touch on a node of anxiety for the Patristic writers since they are indicators of corporeality; situating them in Paradise risks introducing and thus legitimating the corporeal. As Turner points out, to look back at Adam and Eve from a post-lapsarian perspective is to risk making anachronistic assumptions:

> The innocence of Adam and Eve is a fragile state, moreover, and one not

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[1] Mary Irma Corcoran. *Milton's Paradise with Reference to the Hexameral Background*. pp. 76ff.

> likely to be strengthened by exploration. Ordinary humanity cannot look at Adam and Eve as they first looked at each other, naked and unashamed—or rather, neither naked nor clothed, since this opposition of concepts did not yet even exist." (*One Flesh* 34)

The innocence of Adam and Eve is indeed a fragile state, and the issue of sex is a particularly dangerous one if we desire to keep the innocence of the first parents intact. In order to understand why sex and hunger are such potentially disruptive sites we need first to investigate the concept of the body. Since Patristic writings constituted a tradition upon which Milton drew and against which he constructed his own vision and in order to understand his vision of the body, I will begin by looking at Patristic visions of the body.

In *The Resurrection of the Body*, Caroline Walker Bynum groups attitudes toward the body by dividing the Patristic sources into two distinct branches: materialism and spiritualism.[2] Materialists believed that the corporeal body survives after the resurrection, while spiritualists adhered to the idea that the body is discarded and only the soul survives after the resurrection. Although this is a good way of organizing a large body of material that requires some structure, these two terms need further investigation since their use implies a homogeneity that does not recognize the conceptual multiplicity that exists in relation to attitudes towards the body. I don't want to re-impose a constructed homogeneity on these sources, but I do want to introduce the notion that the body about which the Patristics speak is not always the same body. Specifically, Bynum's classification of the patristic sources does not examine the definition of body around which each branch of her binary is constructed. Throughout this division, Bynum maintains that a castigation of the body in no way implies a hatred for the body yet she fails to recognize that there are different conceptions of the body which complicate this assertion. In fact, the spiritualists have a different conception of the body from the materialists. While Bynum defines the materialist branch as "driven by a powerful need to assert the palpable, fleshly quality of the body that will be rewarded or punished at the end of time" (34), she simultaneously maintains that the materialists separate from body all change and decay. Although she claims that the body of the materialists is 'fleshly,' this body is most commonly the body of the ascetic, which is actually the opposite of fleshly since the activities of the ascetic are designed to purge and discipline its fleshiness. The body that Bynum claims the materialists embrace is not a living/decaying body complete with somatic processes. While materialist writers claim that the body undergoes a change from matter to spirit through its resurrection, this incorporation of the "physical" body into the spiritual body requires that the boundaries of the physical body be redrawn. Bynum, in fact, highlights the constitutive ambiguity in the body: "Body is flux and frustration, a locus of pain and process. If it becomes impassible and incorruptible, how is it still body?" (59). The materialists attempt to remove process from the body through their commitment to asceticism.

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[2] This critique of Bynum makes use of many fine studies, namely Peter Brown's *Body and Society* and James Grantham Turner's *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton*.

Frye associate asceticism with an implied depreciation of the values of the human body (263), but Bynum explains asceticism, fasting, and sexual abstinence not as a castigation of the body but rather as a way of preparing the body for its resurrection. These practices allow the body to approach a state of changelessness which mirrors that of heaven (Bynum 40). A paradox is therefore revealed when Bynum uses the materialist's view of the body to redeem attitudes towards asceticism since that view of the body is a very specific one. The body of the aesthete is the body which has ceased to undergo, in large measure, somatic processes: "The extraordinary bodily discipline of the ascetic movement, in both its Origenist and anti-Origenist branches was directed toward making the body static and incorruptible. Change itself was the problem" (Bynum 112). Ideally this body eats very little and emits little waste and does not participate in sexual relations. Instead this body demonstrates a transcendence of decay in life: "To Gregory (as to Origen, Aphrahat, and Ephraim), the body of the ascetic begins already on earth to live the life beyond procreation and nutrition it will have it heaven" (Bynum 84). Bynum's translation of a portion of chapter nine of Jerome's eighty-fourth letter makes clear that the body that he loves, as a materialist, is the body which is free from decay, the body of the ascetic:

> I do not despise the flesh in which Christ was born and resurrected. . . . I do not despise the clay which, converted after baking into a vessel without defect, reigns in heaven. . . . I love chaste flesh, virginal and fasting; I love of the flesh not the works but the substance; I love a flesh that knows it is going to be judged; I love that flesh which is, for Christ, at the hour of martyrdom, broken, torn to pieces and burned. (94)

The body that Jerome 'loves' is the continent body, the body that is prepared for heaven and the body that is destroyed. It is this body which is free from process and decay that is celebrated by the materialists.

The spiritualists, on the other hand, according to Bynum, are those who believe that the body will perish and only the spirit will ascend to heaven. The "body" for the spiritualists is present after death, but it has lost all the properties of matter. While Bynum interprets the spiritualist's "body" as a way in which change can be understood as progression and fertility rather than decay (66), this fertility is not the fertility of the corporeal but rather of the spirit. The processes of the body such as ingestion, excretion, and coition are removed, while bodily change is still associated with decay and death. Bynum sets the spiritualists in contrast to the materialists, yet both the spiritualists and the materialists edit matter out of body: one by declaring it to be a shadow of a true spiritual self, and the other by claiming that the body is resurrected and can therefore approach spirit. In both cases, it is only through separating sensuality and fertility from the body that the body can be celebrated.

In claiming that "[d]espite its suspicion of flesh and lust, Western Christianity did not hate or discount the body" (11), Bynum makes the decision to include only the physical shell as the body. However, Western Christianity did hate biological process (the flesh) and "for most of Western history body was understood primarily as the locus of biological process" (xviii). The literature of late antiquity is full of the fear of being changed by what is natural process (Bynum 112). Change is a locus of anxiety because the body's changeableness is a precursor of death, and likewise death itself is horrible because "it was part of oozing, disgusting, uncontrollable biological process" (Bynum 113). Sex and hunger are part of this uncontrollable process and "[s]uch process, beginning at conception and continuing in the grave, threatened identity itself" (Bynum 113). Death is the final change of the body, but sex is a harbinger of this change. As John Bugge writes: "The unavoidable inference is that, just as sexual intercourse provides for the replenishment of physical life, it also ensures the continuation of death" (11).

Since change was the definitive ontological scandal to ancient philosophers, they sought to fix or stabilize identity (Bynum 56-7). Fixing identity involved a separation of the body from change. This kind of distinction, this bracketing of change, is the force behind asceticism. In Patristic writings, the body and asceticism are intertwined. Indeed, "[b]y the year 300, Christian asceticism, invariably associated with some form or other of perpetual sexual renunciation, was a well-established feature of most regions of the Christian world" (Brown 202). Renunciation, as Peter Brown points out, includes sexual renunciation but also commonly included renunciation of certain foods. Regardless of what was renounced, it was invariably attached to notions of corruption and decay: renunciation was a way in which, presumably, Christians could separate themselves from the decay that was associated with biological processes that led to death. The body was redeemed precisely through a displacement of the body's corporeality to the "flesh." Brown points to Paul's antithesis between the spirit and the flesh as the root of this displacement: Paul labeled as 'the flesh': "the body's physical frailty, its liability to death" (48).

This displacement, as we have seen, is in fact a result of tension between two bodies. In *Powers of Horror*, an examination of the production of subjectivity, Julia Kristeva notes the connotations of "flesh" in the Christian context: "Paul stigmatizes a much more physical corporeality. . . when he implants the power of sin within the flesh" (126). She points out that to Paul, death is in the flesh. The flesh is glossed by Paul as our sinful nature. However, as Kristeva points out, the biblical concept of "flesh" is not always consistent:

> flesh here signifies according to two modalities: on the one hand, close to

> Hebraic flesh (basar), it points to the "body" as eager drive confronted with the drives harshness; on the other, it points to a subdued "body", a body that is pneumatic since it is spiritual, completely submersed into (divine) speech in order to become beauty and love. (124)

One of these bodies is the body that has been emptied of change and of signifiers of change; the other is a body that is sexual and changes and is therefore the body of death: "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom. 7:5). Paul pleads: "who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24). Pauline theology and the Patristic writings try to displace "the body of this death" in order to redeem the body of love, yet as Kristeva points out, these two bodies are intertwined:

> These two "bodies" are obviously inseparable, the second ("sublimated") one unable to exist without the first (perverse because it challenges Law). One of the insights of Christianity, and not the least one, is to have gathered in a single move perversion and beauty as the lining and the cloth of one and the same economy. (124-25)

Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* formulates a system of two bodies like Kristeva's Pauline "body of death" and "body of love." While Bakhtin is writing in the twentieth century, he looks back to the text of Rabelais, a Renaissance writer, in order to construct these two bodies. Bakhtin makes clear that the body of death that both Kristeva and the Patristics highlight, is not only the body of death but also the body of the feminine. It is the maternal body, the grotesque body. It is a changing and incontinent body, a body of orifices and convexities:

> It is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and world are overcome: there is an interchange and an orientation. This is why the main events in the life of the grotesque body, the acts of bodily drama, take place in this sphere. Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body—all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginning and the end of life are closely linked and interwoven. (317)

This is the body that is simultaneously death and birth and it is this body that the Patristics fear: this body is held in contrast to what Bakhtin designates as the classical body, which is closed and smooth and has impenetrable surfaces (317):

> All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade. The opaque surface and the body's 'valleys' acquire an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world. (320)

While this binary appears stark, it is precisely the interplay between and the interdependence of these two bodies that interests me. The interdependence of these bodies arises in a psychoanalytic framework since there is a subject "only with reference to the mapping and signification of its corporeality" (Grosz, *The Body* 85). The subject must emerge as an embodied subject and therefore, within this framework, the body and subjectivity are inseparable.

Kristeva looks back to Pauline theology and Patristic texts, in order to generate what she terms the abject in the production of subjectivity. The concept of the abject is most fully articulated in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Kristeva's investigation of the abject in relation to Christian theology makes her psychoanalytic analysis useful for reading both Milton and Patristic texts. The abject is a difficult concept since it describes both a body and a spatial landscape, a state of mind. Abjection marks the "threshold of language and a stable enunciative position" and "attests to the always tenuous nature of the symbolic order in the face of a series of dispersing Semiotic drives" (Grosz, *Sexual* 71). Abjection is a way of understanding the process of learning to speak and live within the symbolic order, a process that includes learning to suppress what connects us to death. The abject can be understood as what shows us that we exist only in relation to that which we are not, to death. The abject is the 'border' between the self and the other which is in fact an ambiguity between boundaries[3]: "Not me. Not that. But not nothing either" (Kristeva 2). It is perhaps better described as an 'area' of blurring. This non/border is well represented by food, waste and dung and ultimately the corpse, since in each instance these things are not purely-us but are not purely-other either: "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 4): "Abjection is what the symbolic must reject, cover over or contain. The abject. . . insists on the subject's necessary relation to death, corporeality, animality, materiality—those relations which consciousness and reason find intolerable" (Grosz, *Sexual* 73). The abject is, in fact, a threat to the subject as well as its source, since it is through our borders that we define ourselves. The abject, then, interrupts the binaries that we construct in order to separate ourselves from death and confounds Bakhtin's neatly distinguished bodies by exposing the subject's reliance on corporeality.

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[3] "We may call it a border, abjection is above all ambiguity" (Kristeva, *Powers* 9)

Since we are all in possession of dying bodies, we are all threatened by boundaries that are not stable; we are joined to the corpse. This is why the culmination of abjection lies in the corpse: the corpse is "death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (Kristeva 4). The corpse is horrifying since "[t]he corpse signifies the supervalance of the body, the body's recalcitrance to consciousness, reason, or will. It poses a danger to the ego in so far as it questions its stability and its tangible grasp on and control over itself" (Grosz, *The Body* 92). While Kristeva feels horror at the corporeal waste that confronts us in our mortality, the corpse is the corporeal waste which is, finally, us. The presence of bodily change prefigures this corpse since we expel harbingers of change in an effort to become other; change and incontinence reveal death at the centre of our being: "Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by its outside, life by death" (71). Yet to attempt to expel the abject is to attempt to expel death. Death is "the place where I am not and which permits me to be" (3). It is through change leading to death that there can be life:

> refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border

> of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. (Kristeva 3)

Abjection, then, is a knowledge that life and death are bound together: "all abjection is in fact recognition of the *want* on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded" (Kristeva 5). So the being that the subject enjoys is based on a not-being. "The abject is the violence of mourning for an 'object' that has always already been lost" (15). The object that has always already been lost is our life without death. Because knowledge of the abject is knowledge of a subject's placement in a discourse of death, the abjection of self occurs when the subject "finds that the impossible constitutes its very *being*, that it *is* none other than abject" (Kristeva 5).

The grotesque body of Bakhtin is a figure for the abject since this is a body whose boundaries are not secure. This is the body from which Paul pleads to be delivered. It is the body of death that is also the maternal body. Kristeva mirrors the fear of change of the Patristics in her location of the abject in the maternal. For Kristeva, abjection at its most basic is about the mother's violent expulsion of the child's body and the child's expulsion of the mother. In that moment, which is itself a kind of death, the subject comes into being, but must continually repeat this process, keeping the maternal (or the abject) at bay. Kristeva constructs the maternal body as the archetypal incontinent body which is subject to biological processes. Grosz argues that since Kristeva "is content to attribute an irreducibly biological basis to pregnancy while refusing an identity or agency to the pregnant woman," she "accepts an essentialist notion of maternity as a process without a subject" (*The Body* 97). It is precisely Kristeva's prioritizing of the bodily processes that link her maternal body with the Patristic body of death. "Indeed fertility—biological process itself—was often taken as decay" (Bynum 12). This maternal body is the site of the Semiotic and "a breach or rupture in the Symbolic" (Grosz, *The Body* 96).

Like the body of death, "[t]he abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine" (Kristeva 1): rather, the abject is "radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva 2). The body of death draws us since abjection is central to subjectivity, and yet to understand the corporeal body is to understand our own death and to occupy the place "where meaning collapses." Similarly the corporeal body repulses us, yet it is a repulsion of what cannot be completely separated from the subject: "even before being *like*, "I" am not but do *separate*, *reject*, *abject*" (Kristeva 13). Ultimately the abject is necessary for subjectivity, for life, but Kristeva makes it clear that this subjectivity is intertwined with death and lack: "'I' am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death" (3).

Abjection "kills in the name of life" (Kristeva 15) as surely as it gives life in the name of death, and for this reason, it is imperative the abject be contained and bracketed. We reject/abject and transform a "death drive into a start of life, of new significance" (Kristeva 15). Although for Kristeva the presence of the abject is a necessary component of being, if we can associate the abject with something other than our bodies, our selves, then we can forget that it is our bodies, our selves that are joined to death: "*The abject would thus be the 'object' of primal repression*" (Kristeva 12).

Kristeva has made it clear that the abject must be bracketed in order for the subject to separate itself from death and Christian asceticism was the way in which the Church bracketed the abject. By trying to separate the body that they inhabited from the body that changes, ascetics attempted to establish a clear boundary between themselves and death.

Their fear of change led them to try to inhabit bodies that did not change, and we can understand this fear of change in light of Kristeva's abject. Fear of change is recognition that change represent the loss of a substantial core to our subjectivity. More than that, the anxiety about change is a concern with personal death.

Essentially, as long as there is the possibility that the two bodies can be separated, that the body can be separated from the flesh, then the body can be kept good. In Kristevan terms, there must be an abject in order for the body to be both clean and proper. Since there is technically no abject in Paradise, yet in the Kristevan framework the abject is necessary for subjectivity, the writing of Paradise must involve the introduction of the abject. The abject can be displaced from the subject, away from the body, but the introduction of incontinence, including sex and hunger, into the bodies of the Garden, makes it difficult to displace the abject from the body. This is why there is a reluctance on the part of Patristic writers to write sex into Garden of Eden, since the placement of a body that is sexual within Paradise places there a generative body which is linked to death.

In order to understand how the body of death is displaced, we need to take a closer look at the work of Augustine as a church father who attempts to theorize both sex and hunger in the garden of Eden. Brown speaks of Augustine as departing from an established tradition in the introduction of sex into Paradise and his concurrent introduction of Adam and Eve as physical beings: "In proposing a markedly different exegesis of the opening chapters of the book of Genesis from any that we have met so far, Augustine ensured that the golden mist that had hung over the slopes of Paradise would lift forever in the Latin West" (400). Augustine does break with the theological tradition of avoiding sex in Paradise, but his presentation of the body in Paradise does not completely raise the "golden mist" of Paradise. A look at Augustine reveals the tension between the two Bakhtinian bodies since Augustine's "accounts of natural process invariably gravitate toward the problem of rot. Although he does not say so explicitly, he seems unable to imagine a case of growth or change that is not in some way a deterioration or loss of identity" (Bynum 101). This observation is borne out in Augustine's picture of the Garden of Eden. Here, a certain kind of process is excluded, and sex and eating are particular nodes of tension since they are representatives of the changeable body.

For Augustine, the bodies of Paradise are neither wholly free from the corporeal (*City* 11:10) nor are they bodies that grow old or end in "inevitable death" (*City* 13:20). Since the corporeal body is joined to death, Augustine works hard to displace the notion of biological, messy sex from Paradise, despite God's injunction to increase and multiply: "But one might say that the manner of union might have been different in immortal bodies, so that there would be only the devout affection of charity, and not the concupiscence associated with our corrupt flesh, in the procreation of children" (*Literal* 3:21).

In order to construct a body that is whole, Augustine displaces the connection with death inherent in the corporeal, changing body onto lust. Designing the sex act as an act of the will, Augustine carefully removes any notion of lack or excess to the sphere of uncontrolled desire. Augustine maintains that Adam and Eve could have had generative sex but states that their sexual behavior would have been perfectly controlled by the will. It was because fallen sexuality was no longer perfectly controlled by the will, that it was a shadow of death to Augustine (Brown, *Body* 408). To remove that shadow of death in Paradise, Augustine theorizes that in Paradise, "the sexual organs would have been brought into activity by the same bidding of the will as controlled the other organs. . . the male seed could have been dispatched into the womb, with no loss of the wife's integrity" (*City* 14:26). Augustine allows change in Paradise in such a way that he distances the connotations of death that are suggested by a changing body and displaces them from that body onto specific attitudes. He admits the body of change into Paradise but only if the change is superficial.

Augustine does not actually propose that Adam and Eve had sex but explains that they fell too quickly:

> The possibility that I am speaking of was not in fact experienced by those for whom it was available, because their sin happened first, and they incurred the penalty of exile from paradise before they could unite in the task of propagation as a deliberate act undisturbed by passion. The result is that the mention of this subject now suggests to the mind only the turbulent lust which we experience, not the calm act of will imagined in my speculation. (*City* 14:26)

This alleviates the difficulty that Augustine foresees in articulating his theory: "This theory can be proposed, although how it could all be explained is another matter" (*Literal* 3:21).

Not only is sex a locus of anxiety about the body for Augustine, but food in Paradise is troubling as well. He concludes that there can be no need for food in any but fallen bodies. "Surely before sinning he did not need such food, since his body could not corrupt for lack of it" (*Literal* 3:21). At the same time Augustine asserts that it if Adam and Eve did eat, it was to prevent desire rather than as a response to desire. Augustine theorizes that Adam and Eve could have partaken of food in Paradise but this ingestion was precisely to avoid any lack in the body: "Thus the purpose of the other foods was to prevent their animal bodies from experiencing any distress through hunger or thirst" (*City* 13:20). For Augustine then, to eat is to satisfy a need and to prevent a lack in the body.[4] Augustine theorizes that indeed Adam and Eve could feel no desire for the forbidden tree:

> Or could it have been that they desired to lay hands on the forbidden tree, so as to eat its fruit, but that they were afraid of dying? In that case both desire and fear were already disturbing them, even in that place. But never let us imagine that this should have happened where there was no sin of any kind. (*City* 14:10)

Ultimately, Augustine maintained the idea "of wholeness and a hardening of the body against change" (Bynum 104). He states in sermon 155: "Take away death and body is good." The body in paradise "lived without any want, and had it in his power to live like this for ever. Food was available to prevent hunger, drink to prevent thirst, and the tree of life was there to guard against old age and dissolution. There was no trace of decay in the body, or arising from the body" (*City* 14:26). For Augustine's body in Paradise there is no desire or want and there is no decay.

While some theologians like Augustine allowed the possibility of sex inside the walls of the garden, it was nonetheless a garden without change, since it was by necessity a garden without death. Within the Kristevan view of the production of subjectivity, the introduction of the corporeal body within Paradise requires the displacement of death, but Paradise lacks sin, and Kristeva claims that the abject is confinable in the presence of

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[4] As Turner points out, Augustine would have agreed with Milton that Angels eat real food but he would not have agreed that they need food (*One Flesh* 53). To admit that angels need food in Paradise is to admit that angels are embodied in some way and that the spiritual body is not whole in

Christian sin: Abjection "finally encounters, with Christian sin, a dialectic elaboration, as it becomes integrated in the Christian Word as a threatening otherness—but always nameable, always totalizable" (17). Without the presence of sin, the abject must be distanced from the subject. To avoid the necessity of this displacement, most theologians did not represent biological processes within the garden, or depicted them very carefully, since to insert the corporeal body in Paradise is to establish that body in a discourse that relies on death: "Contrary to what enters the mouth and nourishes, what goes out of the body, out of its pores and openings, points to the infinitude of the body proper and gives rise to abjection" (Kristeva 10). The establishment of the body as corporeal in Paradise raises the question of whether humans were created perfect:

> The two currents of sin interpretation that have buffeted the Church for centuries appear to have been centered in that particular ambiguity of the flesh. Was Adam a sinner to begin with, or did he become one of his own 'free will'? . . . It is a long story, and if it has officially been brought to a close in the institutions that rule society in our time, it is brought to life again every time a man touches on those areas, those nodes, where symbolicity interferes with his corporeality. (Kristeva 125)

Corporeal bodies in Paradise touch on this node of anxiety, and even Augustine's *theoretical* bodies require displacement of somatic processes in order to keep them whole.

It is true that there is theoretically no death in Paradise. As a fallen writer however, Milton exists in a discourse in which death is present. Milton's presence in the discourse of death allows us to look at subjectivity in the Garden in relationship to the

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itself.

abject. The subject for Kristeva is necessarily a speaking subject, and the advent of subjectivity is concurrent with the introduction of the subject into the Symbolic. Grosz explains the Kristevan Symbolic as first "the organization of the social order according to the imperatives of paternal authority." Secondly it "refers to the order of language, and particularly to language considered as a rule-governed system of signification. . . The Symbolic is the order of representation" (*Sexual* xxiii). The Kristevan Semiotic, on the other hand

> refers to both a libidinal organization in the child's psychosexual life, one which requires repression if the child is to become a social and speaking subject; and to the unrepresented conditions of representations, the drives, energies, impulses, and materiality signification must harness as its unformed raw materials, before and beyond the imposition of unity, logic, coherence and stability provided by the symbolic. (Grosz, *Sexual* xxi)

In fact, the two bodies that I have discussed roughly correspond to Kristeva's categories of the Semiotic and the Symbolic and their interpenetration is mirrored by the interpenetration of the Semiotic and the Symbolic. The Semiotic is related by Kristeva to the maternal body, and at times it transgresses the boundaries of the Symbolic (Grosz, *Sexual* xxi).

According to Kristeva: "The genesis of stable subjectivity and coherent articulation are possible only because sexual drives and bodily process becomes enmeshed, bit by bit, in signification" (Grosz, *Sexual* 71). This establishment of subjectivity corresponds to the rejection of the maternal body: "The subject's definitive place as an 'I' in discourse occurs only when vocalization substitutes for the pleasure of the maternal body, when the desire of the mother is exchanged for the Father's Name" (Grosz, *The Body* 101). Essentially, the child must learn to position itself as 'I' in the Symbolic order, and the separation between the maternal body and the child's subjectivity is the "split out of which language is born" (Grosz, *The Body* 100). Despite this split, there "remains an unrepresented residue that refuses to conform, as Christianity requires, to masculine, oedipal, phallic representations" (Grosz, *The Body* 99). This unrepresented residue is the residue of the Semiotic. The presence of the Semiotic is the presence of the abject since it is the Semiotic that reveals that we are joined to the maternal body and to the body of death. For this reason the body itself is unrepresentable. In fact, the Kristevan Semiotic represents the body as multiple.

In her introduction to *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, Kelly Oliver stresses the interdependence between identity and negation, between the Symbolic and the Semiotic. Like the two bodies, these two cannot exist independently of each other. The Symbolic is more complex than the assertion of the Law: "For Kristeva, signification, the Symbolic order, is always heterogeneous. This is why revolutions within Symbolic order are possible. The Symbolic order is not just the order of Law. Rather, for Kristeva, it is also the order of resistance to Law" (Oliver 10). This is because there is "oscillation between semiotic and symbolic elements within signification" which results in proliferation (Oliver 10). In the same way there is within the sealed body a potential for resistance since the incontinent body always inhabits the sealed body. The separation of body and change is equivalent to the separation of the Kristevan Symbolic and Semiotic. It is a separation which is artificial.

While the project of writing Paradise is a project centered in this separation of the

Symbolic and the Semiotic, Milton does not maintain this separation. The presence of death in the Garden is revealed in the emergence of the abject in Milton's anxiety around ideas of change and exchange. Just as Milton can only be a subject in response to his own death, so too the unfallen bodies can become subjects only in this Kristevan sense in relation to their deaths. John Lechte points out that it is in representing horror, the abject, that a reconciliation with the maternal body becomes possible (162). Of course for Milton, the reconciliation with the maternal body, the writing of the maternal body is the introduction of death, and there is thus always a tension between the horror and Paradise. For Milton, the unfallen body is the object that is always already lost. Milton faces unique challenges in writing Paradise since there is theoretically no sin present in the garden and there is no receptacle for the displaced abject which Milton's discourse demands.

Ultimately, the writing of Paradise is perilous because as fallen creatures we are infected with the knowledge of death. Arguably this knowledge of death—namely our own death—sets up a signifying system in which life and death are inseparable. Sex then becomes, for the fallen, a precursor to death. Milton tells us that Adam and Eve are "just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (*PL* 3.98-99), but this explanation is only satisfactory if we can for a moment imagine Milton outside of the 'fallen' system of signification. Milton is indeed a fallen creature, and as a fallen creature, he is unable to capture the Paradise that he seeks. Milton embeds the changing body in Paradise and yet to avoid the fall as an always already event, there is a resulting struggle between the two versions of the body. There is anxiety about lack and multiplicity that is embedded in the text, and I will examine these moments of anxiety in order to trace Milton's complex relationship with the body.

Oliver sees as Kristeva's project as learning "to live within the flexible, always precarious borders of human society. We must unravel the double-bind between completely inhabiting the Symbolic—and thereby taking up a rigid unified subject position—and refusing the Symbolic—and thereby inhabiting psychosis" (13). This I see as Milton's project and indeed as his struggle. Like Oliver I want to open up possibility of difference within my own text (14) and I seek to reveal the possibility of difference in Milton's text.

Chapter II

Abjecting Corporeality in *Paradise Lost*

According to Kristeva, each subject must—as a condition of subjectivity—face the reality of his or her own demise. In a sense, this awareness of death is a version of the subject's continual encounter with the abject. We have seen that there is in the patristic tradition a fear of any lack or change, which can be explained in relation to Kristeva's theory of the abject and its relationship to death. Milton's resistance to the abject is not, however, simply a fear of death. Ultimately, the blurring of the boundaries precipitated by encountering the abject calls into question the nature of subjectivity and personhood. Stephen Greenblatt in his essay "Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture" argues against a Renaissance conception of personal subjectivity and, consequently, the feasibility of a psychoanalytic reading of Renaissance texts. David Mikics, on the other hand, points out that this anti-subjectivism simplifies Renaissance texts, which show a complex relationship and division between system and self (10-11). Mikics goes on to point out in his discussion of *Paradise Lost* and subjectivity that the Kristevan subject is indeed relevant for Milton since Spenser, as part of the tradition that Milton inherits, does define "the pathos of discontinuity or separation as the basis for selfhood" (131). In *The Tremulous Private Body*, Francis Barker supports the position that our personhood is historical, and he dates this emergence of subjectivity to the Renaissance: "ever since the Renaissance, Western 'societies' at large have been committed – officially at least, and often profoundly and proudly – to the idea of the individual as the foundation of value and meaning" (v).

John Guillory concludes in response to Greenblatt's article that historicism has a right to demand cautiousness in the use of psychoanalytic theory to explain earlier texts, yet "the relation of psychoanalysis to Renaissance culture cannot be reduced to one of simple irrelevance" (*Milton*, 195). In fact, Greenblatt argues that "psychoanalysis seems to follow upon rather than explain Renaissance texts" (221), and I would largely agree with this argument. In using a Kristevan framework, I do not mean to imply that Kristeva can be used to explain Milton. Rather, as Guillory suggests, Renaissance culture can be seen as the origin of psychoanalysis (*Milton*, 195). Since the seventeenth century is a crucial site in the very long process of the formation of our modern subjectivity, Milton is establishing in some primordial way what Kristeva articulates. So while there is an ongoing discussion about the potential for anachronism in discussing subjectivity in the Renaissance, there is critical support for my use of Kristevan subjectivity in relation to Milton.

According to Kristeva we cannot exist without boundaries (3), yet paradoxically, to recognize boundary is to recognize the body and ultimately to recognize death. At its most basic, abjection is about the mother's violent expulsion of the child's body, a separation, a vomiting, and the child's simultaneous expulsion of the mother.[5] In that moment, which is itself a kind of death because it signals the end of the mother/child dyad, the subject comes into being: this process of redefining the subject must, however, be continually repeated in order to keep the maternal, the abject, at bay. Essentially, in order to keep the abject from overwhelming the subject, the subject must continuously face its own death. The abject, as essential to personhood, is a dialectic of repulsion and attraction that both repels and engages the subject.

I will be arguing that the abject is linked throughout *Paradise Lost* with death and the feminine. One of the more dramatic illustrations of the link forged between the abject, the feminine, and death is found at the gate of Hell with Sin and Death. Milton depicts the consequences of the separation/union with the maternal body and its culmination in the abject. He narrates a primal separation and its consequences:

> At last this odious offspring whom thou seest
> Thine own begotten, breaking violent way
> Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain
> Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
> Transformed: but he my inbred enemy
> Forth issued, brandishing his fatal dart.
> Made to destroy: I fled, and cried out *Death*;
> Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sighed
> Through all her caves, and back resounded *Death*.
> I fled, but he pursued (though more, it seems,
> Inflamed with lust than rage) and swifter far,
> Me overtook his mother all dismayed,
> And in embraces forcible and foul
> Engend'ring with me, of that rape begot
> These yelling monsters that with ceaseless cry

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[5] The maternal does not need to be an expression of the woman's association with the abject but is

Surround me, as thou saw'st, hourly conceived
And hourly born, with sorrow infinite
To me, for when they list into the womb
That bred them they return, and howl and gnaw
My bowels, their repast; then bursting forth
Afresh with conscious terrors vex me round (*PL* 2.781-801)

This is the narration of a bitter effort to expel offspring in a struggle for subjectivity, and consistent with the Kristevan framework, this subjectivity is coexistent with the knowledge of death. When Sin expels her offspring, she cries out the name of death; Death is its name. The mother expels Death, but then Death again possesses her, and this repossession is another struggle for subjectivity—since in order to keep the abject at bay, the subject must continuously repel everything that is evidence of her own lack and her own mortality. Of course, this is not a possible project since life and death, birth and the abject, are intertwined. Sin and Death, mother and child, can exist only together: Death and Sin, are intertwined at the basic level of existence. Sin tells Satan: "he knows / His end with mine involved" (*PL* 2.806-7). To fly from the abject is an impossibility, and the reunion of mother and child engenders an eternal struggle. The hell hounds are a figure for this eternal attempt to push away the abject in their unremitting emergence and reentrance into the womb. That this encounter takes place in a liminal zone, a gate, also implies its relation to the boundaried nature of the Kristevan abject.

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simply a moment at which the fracturing of identity begins. It is the site of a primal lack.

Sin is the maternal body whose boundaries must be continually redrawn as a kind of incessant torture. The maternal body in *Paradise Lost* is embodied in Sin as an "excessive grown" body (2.779). As we see in Satan's encounter with Sin, death, the abject, and the maternal body are closely connected. This is not to say that the maternal body is evil, because as a representation of the Kristevan abject, the maternal is what gives life and what brings the subject into being. The maternal is the body of Sin but it is also Chaos, which is generative and bewitching—also terrifying and overwhelming—and Milton gestures towards this construction of the maternal in the glimpses that we get of Chaos. Heaven and earth rise out of Chaos (*PL* 1.10) and Chaos is fascinating in the Blanchotian sense of being simultaneously drawing and repellant:

> a dark
> Illimitable Ocean without bound,
> Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,
> And time and place are lost; where eldest Night
> And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
> Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
> Of endless wars, and by confusion stand. (*PL* 2.891-97)

This powerful generative force is both the birth and the death of the subject. These passages that deal with Chaos and Sin and Death set up a model of emerging subjectivity in *Paradise Lost.* While the first passage deals with allegorical figures and bodies and the other is more temporal and spatial, both explore the way in which subjectivity is coexistent with both birth and death.

Like the Kristevan subject, Milton's subject in *Paradise Lost* is created in conjunction with loss and lack: "Milton's poetry places tragic loss as the center of self-definition" (Mikics 131). This linking of subjectivity and lack establishes the perfection of Paradise as wishful but not realizable and leads Mikics to speak of subjectivity in Eden as "incipient falleness" (130). Milton effectively demonstrates the strife that is created in the attempt to establish personhood. John Ulreich Jr. in his article "Spenser and Milton on the Nature of Fiction," looks at Adam's dream of Eve and concludes that "Adam experiences his temporary loss of Eve as a potential loss of self: 'To lose thee were to lose myself' (IX.959)" (371). As Joan Webber writes concerning Milton's God: "God cannot exist without making things; he cannot make without dividing; he cannot divide without longing for wholeness" (114). As with the birth of Death and the hell-hounds, the abject emerges in Milton's texts as both a threat to, and as producer of, the subject.

In *Paradise Lost* Milton creates bodies whose relationship to the abject is, necessarily, troubled. Milton's task in undertaking to tell the story of Paradise is to create bodies that have no relationship with death and that do not necessarily look towards their own deaths. Milton writes from a post-lapsarian world about an unfallen world and represents a world without death, just as psychoanalysis imagines a world before the consciousness of separation, the realm, according to Kristeva, of the Semiotic. This separation of bodies and death is impossible in a Kristevan framework since bodies can only have existence in the fallen world in the presence of change and decay. The Kristevan maternal body, as well as the Renaissance female body, is changeable and perceived as dangerous to the autonomous male subject. The

Renaissance female body is by no means a stable category, but there is generally a "metaphorical association of woman with mother earth, nutrition, fruitfulness and the fluctuations of the moon" (Maclean 44). Maclean argues that in Renaissance medicine, the female body was undergoing a change: "There is far less stress on the noxious nature of menses at the end of the sixteenth century, and the majority of texts stress their harmless excremental nature" (40). The feminine body in this medical discourse is both good and evil, the excretions are both good and bad. It is perhaps not surprising that it is this unstable body that appears in Milton's text. While subjectivity emerges in Paradise in conjunction with lack, Milton tries to come up with a strategy to stabilize the body. Milton demonstrates a drive to "resolve the conflict between subjective pathos and law by reducing the ambiguous to the unequivocal" (Mikics 132). So while Milton seems to try to honour excess and heterogeneity in his celebration of the Garden in Book Four, which encompasses even the tree of knowledge, not many lines later he reads the Garden in terms of hierarchical power (Mikics 135):

> for well thou know'st
> God hath pronounced it death to taste that Tree,
> The only sign of our obedience left
> Among so many signs of power and rule
> Conferred upon us, and dominion giv'n
> Over all other creatures that possess
> Earth, air and sea. (*PL* 4.426-32)

Mikics stresses that Milton clearly sides neither with heterogeneity nor its elimination, yet as we have seen with the body of Milton's Sin, in the care of bodies in general, what is changeable and excessive, multiple, is often displaced to the world of nature and, in a pinch, to the feminine: "There is, of course, a deeper sense in which the abhorrence of bodily fertility, prevalent. . . in both mainstream and dualist Christian religiosity, is especially an abhorrence of female flesh and female spirituality" (Bynum 21).

The changeable and the permeable are always problematic because of their association with the abject and its implicit gendering. This gendering allows the changeable to be both 'safe' for Milton and 'unsafe'. The multiple may be either abject or heterogeneous, and there are occasions in Paradise when the multiple is neither threatening nor associated with the abject because it is heterogeneous. In fact, Barbara Lewalski argues that Milton's God is multiple to reflect his many qualities and aspects (*Paradise* 113). There are various kinds of multiplicity—sometimes abject and threatening, sometimes heterogeneous and acceptable. Milton's attitude toward the multiple is far from consistent, but there is a current in *Paradise Lost* in which the multiple is associated with the abject, and it is this strain that I will follow.

In part, I think that Milton's inconsistency stems from the fact that he is trying to construct a homogeneous body in an effort to make sex and an unfallen body compatible, but in order to do so, he must bracket those aspects that render the fallen body abject. It is wholeness that Milton seeks, and yet this wholeness leads him back to the womb:

> The subject's imaginary desire is most eloquently expressed in fantasies of wholeness and security, to be found in union with the beloved, a relationship modeled on the infant-mother dyad. Yet this sense of integral being also recalls the prenatal stasis of the womb and thus contrasts radically with the change, tension, discontinuity, and difference that constitute life. (Bronfen 11)

Milton's strategy for creating this corporeal body in Paradise is to separate the abject from the body in Paradise and relegate the corporeal to a manageable sphere, but the abject, the maternal, the changeable, emerges at these points of separation. Milton expresses his anxiety about the maternal, the changeable, both in *Paradise Lost* and *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*, at the moments in the text that deal with bodies and language.

Specifically, Milton reacts to the knowledge that the body in Paradise is in some way the corporeal body, the body of death, by displacing the abject from Adam onto Eve. She is written as body, and it is her association with body which leads to her characterization as a changeable and 'leaky' vessel. Essentially, Eve is constructed as Adam's 'other self' in the sense that she becomes the receptacle for the abject: "on her bestowed / Too much of ornament, in outward show / Elaborate, of inward less exact" (*PL* 8.537-39). By identifying Eve with the body, Milton locates the abject within the female body and moves the abject away from the male body, thereby rendering it 'safe'. This enclosure of the abject within the female body recreates the enclosure of the child in the maternal body. So Milton's recreation of the maternal body as that which encloses the abject is analogous to Eve's enclosure of Cain and ties together the inevitable strands between the maternal, the abject, and death.

For Milton, this body of death is not necessarily simply an incontinent body, since, as Gail Kern Paster writes, for the Early Modern subject "the body. . . was always a humoral entity" (10). This Early Modern body is based on a theory that the body must be permeable in order to maintain balance. The humoral body "had a distinct set of internal procedures dependent on a differential caloric economy (most men being hotter than most women) and characterized by corporeal fluidity, openness, and porous boundaries" (Paster 8). The incontinent body is a problem only if it is a body that cannot be controlled. The bodies in Milton's Paradise do often refuse to be controlled, and Milton displaces these bodies onto the feminine. For example, in Book Eight when Eve is led into the bower by Adam, she blushes, and this blush can be interpreted as a sign of the abject in light of her humoral body: "To the nuptial bow'r / I led her blushing like the Morn" (*PL* 8.510-11). Thomas Wright, writing in the early seventeenth century, explains in *The Passions of the Mind in General* how the blush can be interpreted in the humoral body:

> Hereby we also perceive the cause of blushing; for that those that have committed a fault and are therein apprehended, or at least imagine they are thought to have committed it. . . they blush, because nature, being afraid lest in the face the fault should be discovered, sendeth the purest blood to be a defence and succour" (111)

Eve's blush can be understood as a manifestation of excess fluid. We know that the Early Modern discourse "inscribes women as leaky vessels by isolating one element of the female body's material expressiveness – its production of fluids – as excessive" (Paster 25).

Eve's blush can also be seen in a larger sense as an instance of Milton's showcasing his anxiety about the body. The blush is not only a comment about an inside that is showing on the outside, but also a moment in which the body is presented as thinking or taking control of the mind. At the very least, the partitioning that surrounds inside/outside and body/soul is confounded; this blush is the outward sign of the internal state of Eve. The first few lines of Sir Thomas Wyatt's tenth sonnet illustrate the relationship of the blush to the inside:

> The long love that in my thought doth harbour
> And in my heart doth keep his residence
> Into my face presseth with bold pretence
> And therein campeth, spreading his banner. (1-4)

Here we see the blush as that which expresses the internal and speaks the body. Donne too comments on the blush.

> we understood
> Her by her sight, her pure and eloquent blood
> Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinckly wrought,
> That one might almost say, her bodie thought (The Second Anniversary 243-46)

The blush is again a blurring of the distinction between the mind and the body, which signals a lack of control by the mind. It is precisely this loss of control over the body that invokes the body of death. Since Milton has constructed subjectivity in such a way as to be coexistent with death, he displaces the body of death onto Eve and her body becomes the representative for the abject.

Sex is certainly a locus for the abject in *Paradise Lost*. Part of the dilemma that Milton faces is that he inherits a creation story that foregrounds the abject in its linking of the maternal body with evil. Biblically, the very first experience of pregnancy results in the conception of Cain, who murders his brother. Michael shows Adam the death of Abel and says "These two are brethren, Adam, and to come / Out of thy loins; th'unjust the just hath slain" (*PL* 11.454-56). The fact that Cain's birth results in death identifies the maternal body with evil, and therefore Milton cannot present the maternal body in Paradise without the introduction of evil. Eve is necessarily the body that will host evil and death once it becomes a maternal body. In this creation story, human fertility leads to death, yet Milton praises generative sex: "Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source / Of human offspring" (4.750-51). Eve as maternal in Paradise is therefore the impossible possible.

Since sex and procreation are inseparably tied, even in Paradise, to change and death, the abject emerges clearly in relation to procreation. As Mary Nyquist writes:

> Although procreation is referred to, it is presented as a kind of necessary consequence of the conjunction of male and female, but for that very reason as a subordinate end. Adam's language cleverly associates it with a prior lack, a prior and psychological defect inherent in his being the first and only man. (*Genesis* 118)

Adam recognizes his own lack and expresses to God that this lack is tied to sex:

> Thou in thy self art perfect, and in thee

Is no deficience found; not so is man,
But in conversation with his like to help,
Or solace his defects. No need that thou
Shouldst propagate, already infinite;
And through all numbers absolute though One;
But man by number is to manifest
His single imperfection, and beget
Like of his like, his image multiplied,
In unity defective. (*PL* 8.415-25)

Here we see clearly the double-edged sword of the abject, since it is only through Eve that Adam can be whole, and yet the introduction of procreation is the introduction of death. Sex is therefore presented as a form of the Kristevan abject since it can ensure subjectivity, but concurrently it is what introduces death.

In response to the abject, Milton's strategy for stabilizing the body is to create a body that is unchanging. This requires a Kristevan displacement of what is 'unclean'. David Miller talks about this displacement of the unclean in his discussion of Book 3, Canto 9 of *The Faerie Queene*, the Castle of Alma and allegory of the body in which the genitals are "avoided": "The displacement through which genital eros finds its way into representation within the temperate body is enacted silently by this allegorical 'framing' of sexuality" (174). Milton too, engages in a displacement of the unclean. He does this by "framing" the maternal, the abject in these images. One of the ways in which he attempts to separate human sexuality from the abject is through placing it in Paradise, which effectively separates sexuality from desire and any suggestion of lack. Milton must then displace the change that is associated both with sex and eating. So while Milton attempts to position the embodied subject in Paradise, he nonetheless attempts to circumvent the abject by displacing the attributes of the body associated with the abject. He endeavors to make the impossible division between sexuality, the body, and the abject. Since it is an impossible distinction, he must maintain it continuously, and he must engage in a series of displacements that can never be effective.

Milton attempts to resist an association of the body with death by separating fertility from lack. This includes removing connotations of actual exchange from the body in Paradise, since exchange is symbolic of change and decay. While, on the one hand, Milton celebrates sexual exchange in Paradise, on the other hand, Milton tries to distance notions of exchange from the physical body and instead relocates the abject in social rather than in bodily exchange. This displacement allows the corporeal body that engages in coition to be pure and worthy of Paradise. He sings the praises of wedded love, bodily exchange, but transfers exchange to the social:

> Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights
> His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
> Reigns here and revels; not in the bought smile
> Of harlots, loveless, joyless, unendeared,
> Casual fruition, nor in court amours
> Mixed dance, or wanton masque, or midnight ball,
> Or serenade, which the starved lover sings
> To his proud fair, best quitted with distain. (*PL* 4.763-70)

The images Milton uses to describe what coition is *not* in Paradise are largely images of social exchange. The social body, rather than the individual body, becomes the location for exchange and the abject. Milton provides us with a substitute body in which there is exchange, but this exchange is monetary and the smiles are "bought". Coition, in this passage, is about money or power rather than about the body. This displacement is also a temporal and spatial shift to a post-lapsarian world outside of the poem, and in this sense, it is another sign of the inevitable emergence of the abject in the text. Milton displaces the abject onto the world that follows the Fall and, in this way, anticipates the Kristevan theory that subjectivity must always exist in conjunction with death.

In this passage, coition is largely unrelated to the body—it is the "dance" that has no boundaries and the "masque" which is wanton—and the body is not engaging in meaningful generative coition. It is "casual fruition", and the lover in this scenario is "starved". This is troubling, since Milton tries to displace the abject as the part of the body that is messy and changeable, Bakhtin's grotesque body, since generation is the ultimate manifestation of the abject, and generation is required in Paradise in order to fulfill the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. The body in Paradise remains both generative and leaky.

The abject also creeps into Paradise through Milton's anxiety about penetration. I am not arguing that penetration in and of itself is an expression of the abject, since it is tied to phallocentric power, but penetration is connected to the Kristevan abject in two ways. First, since penetration may lead to procreation and procreation to death, the subject of penetration is linked to the abject in a metonymic chain. Second, penetration is a mixing in which boundaries are violated, and this violation of interior spaces and implied separation is a site of anxiety, since it mirrors both the birth of subjectivity and the subject's inevitable death. Milton is anxious about penetration and its possible links with the abject. The Early Modern body is a leaky body, a humoral body, and, while it is the female body that is often signaled as particularly permeable, this permeability is not always gendered. As a result, the body as permeable is both good and bad, and this intricacy is mirrored in Milton's text. Vapour is the embodiment, in many ways, of the permeable and changeable. As with the body, Milton does assert that the vapourous is real, yet he simultaneously uses vapour as a way to displace penetration from the body in Paradise. Once again, the abject in his text emerges in the fractured way in which he deals with an issue that touches on a node of subjectivity.

In order to distance penetration from the abject, Milton does emphasize that vapours have the power to penetrate. By transferring the penetrative function to the vapourous, Milton tries to avoid the associations of bodily exchange that accompany physical exchange. His use of vapour as a penetrative substance allows him to distance the violation of boundaries from the corporeal body, which then begins to approach the classical body. Although Milton asserts that human generation is ordained by God—"Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth" (*PL* 7.531)—he nonetheless sets up a universe in which a certain kind of penetration is preferred. We saw that Milton tries to separate sex from the corporeal body; in a similar vein, he attempts to substitute a mixing of vapours for bodily penetration in the Garden. The sun participates in this type of penetration and "With gentle penetration, though unseen, / Shoots invisible virtue even to the deep" (*PL* 3.585-86). This is a "clean" mixing that Milton links with procreation in nature:

> while now the mounted sun
> Shot down direct his fervid rays to warm
> Earth's inmost womb, more warmth than Adam needs. (*PL* 5.300-02)

John Leonard in his edition of *Paradise Lost* notes that the sexual allusion of "mounted" and "womb" is probably intended, and this sexual allusion is a further attempt to distance penetration from the corporeal body since it is the sun that is penetrative. According to Kristeva, through this displacement, the body is made proper. Although Milton severs penetration from the corporeal body, he chooses to make this penetration substantial. Milton chooses the word "mounted" in referring to the sun: "while now the mounted sun / Shot down direct his fervid rays" (*PL* 5.300-01). Mount can also mean "[a] boundary" (OED_{1b}) and the idea of a sun within a boundary or bounded implies a real penetration and blurring of two separate bodies. This penetration is also generative:

> the sun that barren shines,
> Whose virtue on itself works no effect,
> But in the fruitful earth; there first received
> His beams, unactive else, their vigour find (*PL* 8.94-97)

The need for subjectivity insists on a substantial penetration, which results in excess and "more warmth that Adam needs".

The construction of penetration as a vapourous exchange continues in Milton's description of the birth of the earth:

> The earth was formed, but in the womb as yet
> Of waters, embyron immature involved,
> Appeared not: over all the face of earth
> Main ocean flowed, not idle, but with warm
> Prolific humour soft'ning all her globe,
> Fermented the Great Mother to conceive,
> Satiate with genial moisture. (*PL* 7 276-82)

In his notes to the text, Leonard says that the sea now acts as a penetrative seed (807), but the phrase "prolific humour" can also mean fertile vapour. The word humour is defined as "[m]oisture, damp exhalation, vapour" (OED_1), which again links what is generative with vapour and 'clean' penetration.

This penetration of vapours is mirrored in Milton's description of angelic sex. Adam asks:

> Love not the Heav'nly Spirits, and how their love
> Express they, by looks only, or do they mix
> Irradiance, virtual or immediate touch?
>   To whom the angel with a smile that glowed
> Celestial rosy red, love's propre hue,
> Answered. Let it suffice thee that thou know'st
> Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
> (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
> In eminence, and obstacle find none
> Of membrane, joint or limb, exclusive bars:

Easier than air with air, if Spirits embrace,
Total they mix, union of pure with pure
Desiring; nor restrained conveyance need
As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul. (*PL* 8.615-29)

The angelic sex is a mixing of air, and this is the mixing that Milton sets up as pure union. Milton makes it clear that it is to spirit that Adam and Eve aspire; this union of spirit is constructed as the ideal union. It is a penetration that involves no leaky bodies.

In trying to escape the abject, Milton uses the strategy of "cleaning up" the corporeal body in Paradise. He introduces the vapourous as a substitute for the corporeal body, which results in a return of the abject and a loss of containment by the Symbolic order. The vapourous form of penetration that replaces corporeal penetration in Milton's imagery can be interpreted as a form of female penetration. Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which Is Not One* explains that what is amorphous in the text can be understood as 'feminine': the "woman-thing" in the text

> is continuous, compressible, dilatable, viscous, conductible, diffusable, . . . That it is unending, potent and impotent owing to its resistance to the countable; that it enjoys and suffers from a greater sensitivity to pressures; that it changes—in volume or in force, for example—according to the degree of heat; that it is, in its physical reality, determined by friction between two infinitely neighboring entities. (111)

Irigaray makes clear that in the Western world, it is women who are identified with compressible physical properties, fluid/vapour. This compressibility is also an uncontainability, which allows them to mix with other bodies.

In Irigaray's framework, the mixing of bodies is threatening since it no longer allows a differentiation between bodies (Irigaray 111) and is directly in defiance of the Symbolic:

> It is already getting around—at what rate? in what contexts? in spite of what resistances?—that women diffuse themselves according to modalities scarcely compatible with the framework of the ruling symbolics. Which doesn't happen without causing some turbulence, we might even say some whirlwinds, that ought to be reconfined within solid walls of principle, to keep them from spreading to infinity. Otherwise they might even go so far as to disturb that third agency designated as the real—a transgression and confusion of boundaries that it is important to restore to their proper order. (Irigaray 106)

Here then, the vapourous, that which is fluid, is associated with a dangerous ability to disperse. While the vapourous is "clean," it also threatens to be uncontainable and excessive, and this excess, the superfluous, is also indicative of the abject since again it signifies the violation of the boundaries of subjectivity. In fact, the link between vapour and excess is made clear in Milton's description of Angelic voiding:

> So down they sat,
> And to their viands fell, nor seemingly
> The angel, nor in mist, the common gloss

> Of theologians, but with keen dispatch
> Of real hunger, and concoctive heat
> To transubstantiate; what redounds, transpires
> Through Spirits with ease. (*PL* 5.433-439)

What is left over is leaked out as vapour through the pores.[6] Presumably, this vapourous voiding is acceptable, while defecation is not. However, there is still an excess of vapour produced, and this excess is characteristic of the way in which the abject is present in the text. As we have seen, penetration is vapourous, and Milton also makes the voiding of Angels vapourous. Both of these strategies are ways of distancing the corporeal body through displacing somatic process from bodies in Paradise onto benign receptors. However, this tidying results in an excess that cannot be contained. While the abject can be temporarily displaced, its role in subjectivity is clear and, as such, it returns to the text.

As we have already seen, penetration is linked in Paradise with the emergence of both subjectivity and death. This locates penetration as a node of anxiety since it is a site at which boundaries are blurred, and this anxiety extends to fertility. Milton's uneasiness about penetration as it relates to fertility emerges in one allusion to the Iliad:[7]

> he in delight
> Both of her beauty and submissive charms
> Smiled with superior love, as Jupiter

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[6] Leonard notes that transpires can mean 'passes out through the pores' (OED $_{3a}$).

[7] Leonard cites Natalie Conti, Mythologiae (1567) "Conti cites *Iliad* xiv 346-51, where Zeus and Hera make love under a cloud" (766).

> On Juno smiles, when he impregns the clouds
> That shed May flowers. (*PL* 4.497-501)

Here Milton's anxiety about the body is betrayed in his manipulation of the allusion. In *The Iliad* Jupiter in fact impregnates Juno, but Milton avoids this mixing of bodies by having Jupiter impregnate the clouds. This union results in vegetative fertility. The penetration is vapourous, yet the very cloud that Milton uses to displace corporeality from the body can also mean "[a]nything that obscures or conceals" (OED).[8] What is obscured is precisely the severance of physical process from the body, which Milton severs then displaces onto "May flowers." Milton attempts to remove Juno, who is a figure for the changeable female body, and substitute for her body may flowers. May flowers symbolize the fertility of spring, yet because this fertility is vegetative and as such, clean and controlled, it is distanced from human subjectivity. In fact, the roots of the word "May" in old English mean "woman or maid, virgin" (OED). It is not fertility itself that is the problem, necessarily, but fertility that is uncontrolled and uncontrollable.

The word 'May', though, is closely connected with incontinent fertility and the rites of May day, including the erecting of a maypole, which would have been well known to Milton. May's connotations would have had a broad cultural currency; May rituals were condemned by the Puritans, as this diatribe by the sixteenth-century Puritan writer Philip Stubbes illustrates:

> Against May, Whitsonday, or other time, all the yung men and maides, olde men and wives, run gadding over night to the woods, groves, hils,

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[8] Milton has already used the word cloud in this sense in Book Three, line 385.

> and mountains, where they spend all the night in plesant pastimes; and in the morning they return, bringing with them birch and branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withall. And no mervaile, for there is a great Lord present amongst them, as superintendent and Lord over their pastimes and sportes, namely, Sathan, prince of hel. But the cheifest jewel they bring from thence is their May-pole, which they bring hime with great veneration, as thus. . . I have heard it credibly reported (and that *viva voce*) by men of great gravitie and reputation, that of fortie, threescore, or a hundred maides going to the wood over night, there have scaresly the third part of them returned home againe undefiled. (Frazer 66-67)

Milton again illustrates the tension between the 'clean' body and the corporeal body and their necessary relationship. By removing the maternal figure, Milton removes the source of the primal lack, yet in doing so, May emerges as a necessary new figure for the maternal.

This concern with fertility is a concern with subjectivity. Adam expresses his concern with unchecked growth:

> to reform
> Yon flow'ry arbours, yonder alleys green,
> Our walk at noon, with branches overgrown,
> That mock our scant manuring, and require
> More hands than ours to lop their wanton growth:
> Those blossoms also, and those dropping gums,

> That lie bestrewn unsightly and unsmooth. (*PL* 4.625-631)

Here the fertility of Paradise is identified as excessive, for fertility is depicted as a physical phenomenon with "blossoms"[9] and "dropping gums." The word "wanton" suggests a certain excessiveness, and it introduces a sexual tone to the passage. It is this sexualized fertility that leads to an "unsmooth" surface in Paradise. This surface is no longer a clear boundary. Here, then, we have an expression of anxiety about fertility and its accompanying blurring of boundaries, which threaten subjectivity through invoking the semiotic, pre-separation phase of existence when our bodies are still linked with the maternal and corporeal body. Yet simultaneously, there is the recognition that it is only through coition that the excess can be conquered. Procreation in this passage is both a way to assert the power of the Symbolic and a way in which the Symbolic is challenged through its link with the corporeal.

In response to this interdependence between fertility and the Symbolic, an interdependence between life and the abject, Milton tries to create an alternate method of change which excludes decay and death. In doing so, he splits death from the body and the Symbolic. Raphael outlines for Adam how he and Eve can ascend to Heaven without passing though death:

> O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
> All things proceed, and up to him return,
> If not depraved from good, created all
> Such to perfection, one first matter all,

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[9] The word "blossom" is specifically associated with reproduction "The flower that grows on any plant previous to the seed or fruit. We generally call those flowers blossoms, which are not much regarded in themselves, but as a token of some following production" (OED 1)

Endued with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
But more refined, more spirituous, and pure,
As nearer to him placed or nearer tending
Each in their several active spheres assigned,
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportioned to each kind. So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More airy, last the bright consummate flow'r
Spirits odorous breathes: flow'rs and their fruit
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed. (*PL* 5.469-83)

His plan for the ascension of Adam and Eve is still described in terms of fertility, but the metaphor of the seed is a tidy metaphor with none of the messiness or incontinence of human procreation. By using the metaphor of the seed, Milton distances fertility from the body of death—the body which is incontinent—and instead focuses on fertility as a attribute of the classical body. Procreative sex is vital to Milton's system, but Milton attempts to make the sealed body a fertile body. Michael Stanford in his article "The Terrible Thresholds: Sir Thomas Browne on Sex and Death" draws a fascinating link between Browne's "squeamishness about death and his distaste for sex" (416), a squeamishness that we see in Milton's representation of the connection between death and sexuality. Browne's distaste for sex leads him to a desire for vegetative reproduction: "I could be content that we might procreate like trees, without conjunction" (416). Stanford points out the vegetative analogies that Browne uses to discuss the resurrection of the body and concludes that plants are "those infinitely cleaner bodies that procreate without conjunction" (420).

This passage in Milton is particularly poignant since the vegetative seed is the oldest Christian metaphor for the resurrected body (Bynum 3): "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24). Biblically, this body does ascend, but like the seed, it passes through death and decay in order to ascend to Heaven. In order for Milton to access subjectivity, he must pass through the abject and understand his own connection to death. He tries to avoid the abject in his use of metaphors, but in doing so, he must speak through the resurrected body, through death.

The most striking image of the necessary clash between the emerging subject with its body of death and the classical body is in the dream scene of Book Four. This clash emerges in the form of an intertextual debate about the substantiality of dreams. Satan speaks a—vapourous—dream into the ear of Eve: when Satan whispers into her ear, a slippery form of vapourous penetration occurs. It was often thought that, in fact, the pure conception of Christ took place through the ear of Mary. This situates this 'dream penetration' in a tradition in which the body can maintain integrity even when it is penetrated. When Adam describes to Eve what a dream is in order to allay her concerns that she has been infected by this dream, he identifies the dream as an imitation of imagination:

> But know that in the soul
> Are many lesser faculties that serve
> Reason as chief; among these Fancy next

> Her office holds; of all external things,
> Which the five watchful senses represent,
> She formes imaginations, airy shapes,
> Which Reason joining or disjoining, frames
> All what we affirm of what deny, and call
> Our knowledge, or opinion; then retires
> Into her private cell when nature rests.
> Oft in her abscence mimic Fancy wakes
> To imitate her; but misjoining shapes,
> Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams,
> Ill matching words and deeds long past or late. (*PL* 5.100-11)

In the Early Modern period, imagination was a point of conjunction between the corporeal and the incorporeal. Avicenna, a physician whose *Canon* was used as a medical text in European universities until at least the seventeenth century, divided the brain into a "quintuple gradation of the internal sense as a progressive 'disrobing' (*denudatio*) of the phantasm from its material accidents" (Agamben 79). In this scheme, the imagination is located after the phantasm and, as such, is the meeting place of the corporeal and the incorporeal:

> The first of the internal apprehensive powers is the phantasy or common sense, which is a power placed in the first cavity of the brain that receives in itself all the forms that are impressed on the five senses and transmitted to it. After this there is the imagination, the force placed in the extremity of the forward cavity of the brain, which holds

> what the common sense receives from the senses and which remains in it even after the sensible objects. (Avicenna, quoted in Agamben 78)

Agamben explains that the imagination is not only receptive but also active (78). The imagination is therefore the farthest reach of the incorporeal and the farthest reach of the corporeal.

In Adam's explanation, then, dreams are an imitation of this point of conjunction between the corporeal and the incorporeal. Mimicking Fancy imitates the imagination. Adam's concern is that the imitation of imagination in dreams misrepresents 'actual' occurrences. Adam expresses concern that the mimicking Fancy is disrupting the knowledge system: she is joining shapes that should not be joined. Importantly, knowledge is attributed to the relationship between Fancy and Reason. In Adam's "good" fancy, the hierarchy is implicit and imagination allows for thought, for knowledge. In dreams, however, the boundaries of body and mind are blurred with the result that thought is disrupted. The mind gets disordered rather than ordered, and the dream is not a true representation of the outside. So in the Kristevan framework of the abject, the dream is rejected as untrue since it involves a blurring of the hierarchy of mind and body which forces an identification of self with body. The dream also foregrounds the fact that the body can seize control of the mind.

Maurice Blanchot, in *The Space of Literature*, expounds a theory of dreaming which works well with this Early Modern conception of dream as a disruption of the knowledge system:

> He who dreams sleeps, but already he who dreams is he who sleeps no longer. He is not another, some other person, but the premonition of

> the other, of that which cannot say "I" any more, which recognizes itself neither in itself nor in others. (167)

Blanchot extends the notion that the dream is a disruption of a knowledge system to include the fact that the dream is then a way in which the boundaries between self and other get confused. An interruption in the knowledge system is an interruption in subjectivity.

After this penetration of what cannot be controlled, Milton is quick to reassert the power of the Symbolic. Adam negates the power of the dream and claims that it will have no effect on Eve:

> Evil into the mind of god or man
> May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
> No spot or blame behind: which gives me hope
> That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream,
> Waking thou never wilt consent to do. (5.117-121)

Adam here is the voice of the Symbolic in the Garden since he reasserts that the insubstantial has no power to effect change. Instead, it is the substantial that has power to effect change, as demonstrated by the actions of Ithuriel when he finds Satan at the ear of Eve:

> him there they found
> Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve;
> Assaying by his devilish art to reach
> The organs of her Fancy, and with them forge
> Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams,

Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint
Th'animal spirits that from pure blood arise
Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise
At least distempered, discontented thoughts,
Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires
Blown up with high conceits engend'ring pride.
Him thus intent Ithuriel with his spear
Touched lightly; for no falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, but returns
Of force to its own likeness: up he starts
Discovered and surprised. As when a spark
Lights on a heap of nitrous powder, laid
Fit for the tun some magazine to store
Against a rumored war, the smutty grain
With sudden blaze diffused, inflames the air:
So stared up in his own shape the Fiend. (*PL* 4.799-819)

Ithuriel's touching of Satan with his spear uncovers Satan's natural shape. The touch returns Satan to his 'own' shape, and this confirms that in the Garden what is substantial has power over what is insubstantial. The physical poking of Satan has power over his illusory disguise. The Symbolic, associated here with God, reveals the 'true' shape of Satan and defeats the illusory power identified with Satan and the feminine. The poke "diffuses" the dangerous vapour of the insubstantial. The 'rumoured war' is the war of the feminine, of the vapourous against the masculine, the bounded, the ordered. As Mikics points out, however, the body in this scene is not insubstantial and Adam's explanation of the dream is unsatisfactory:

> Eve's real embodiment, her move from mere mirror image to autonomous flesh, arrives not in the promised xerox copies that the voice offers her ('multitudes like thyself' [4.474]) but in her palpable love-strife with Adam – and also, alas, in the vertigo, both exhilarating and terrifying of Book 5's dream, which cannot compete with Adam's abstract explanation of how fancy's 'wild work' (5.113) produces dream images. Eve's thrilling nausea during the dream offers a bodily proof that overtakes the doctrinal theory that Adam presents. (146)

Again we see that there is an ongoing dialogue between the body of death and the classical body. Eve's nausea is a sign that, in fact, the 'insubstantial' dream has a substantial effect on the body, and nausea is, of course, the corporeal sign of the abject.

Another reality of the embodied Adam and Eve is their need for food. Milton introduces "wholesome thirst and appetite" (*PL* 4.330) into the Garden and even suggests that angels need food. I argue that Milton's introduction of food into the Garden creates more tension between the corporeal body and the classical body. As we have seen, the classical body is a body whose orifices are sealed, while the grotesque body is a corporeal body that, among other things, excretes. By introducing food and drink into Paradise, Milton locates the corporeal body in Paradise and establishes that not only do Adam and Eve eat and feel hunger, but they have a real physical need for food:

> time may come when men
> With angels may participate, and find
> No inconvenient diet, nor too light fare:
> And from these corporal nutriments perhaps
> Your bodies may at last turn all to Spirit,
> Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend
> Ethereal, as we, or may at choice
> Here or in Heav'nly Paradises dwell;
> If ye be found obedient. (*PL* 5.469-501)

This speech suggests that Adam and Eve do, in fact, need food, a need that is linked with the corporeal.

The concepts of appetite and thirst are difficult to reconcile with Paradise, since both hunger and thirst are tinged with the abject in that they both imply a desire for something that is lacking. Thirst is "[t]he uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of drink; also, the physical condition resulting from this want" (OED_{1a}). It is also "[a] vehement desire; *for*, *after* something," (OED_{2}). Hunger is "[t]he uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of food: craving appetite." (OED_{1}). Through this invocation of lack, hunger and thirst unearth the hole at the base of subjectivity. Both also produce waste in the human body, which is then abjected. Food and drink also tie the individual to the body in exposing the limitations of the body. The corporeal body has needs, and one of these needs is the need to be fed.

Appetite is another concept which by definition introduces lack into Paradise:

> And Eve within, due at her hour prepared

> For dinner savoury fruits, of taste to please
> True appetite, and not disrelish thirst.
> Of nectarous draughts between, from milky stream,
> Berry or grape. (5.303-07)

Appetite is "[t]he determinate desire to satisfy the natural necessities, and fulfill the natural functions, of the body; one of those instinctive cravings which secure the preservation of the individual and the race" (OED$_3$). Milton asserts that there is both hunger and thirst in Paradise and yet he is sensitive to the link between sustenance and the abject, waste. Together, these concepts introduce a lack into Paradise.

Again we need to question why Milton includes eating and drinking in Paradise, but I want to suggest that it is precisely because Milton experienced hunger and thirst, and to embed these attributes in Paradise is to try to rid them of their connection with lack and ultimately with death. Milton's suggestion that angels also eat (5.469-501) is another way in which he displaces the abject by distancing the excreting of the corporeal body (which is linked with eating) from the eating bodies of the angels. The fact that angels eat and yet do not excrete is a way to claim eating for the classical body.

These displacements are ultimately unsuccessful since the narrative leads to its inevitable conclusion, which is the entrance of death and sin at the moment when Eve eats. Eating is the natural result of the hunger and desire with which Satan tempts Eve, and it is in the moment of ingestion that we have the entrance of death. While Satan claims that eating the fruit will make "all things visible in heav'n" (9.604), Milton reveals that in fact eating the fruit makes Adam and Eve aware only of death.

Milton complicates the relationship of hunger and thirst with the abject by writing of Eve's fall in terms of appetite:

> To satisfy the sharp desire I had
> Of tasting those fair apples. I resolved
> Not to defer; hunger and thirst at once,
> Powerful persuaders. (*PL* 9.584-87)

Eve experiences her own hunger in the moment of the Fall. When she looks at the fruit she has "[a]n eager appetite" (9.740-43) and it is in this moment of appetite that Eve becomes aware of her own want of knowledge:

> Thy praise he also who forbids thy use,
> Conceals not from us, naming thee the Tree
> Of Knowledge, knowledge both of good and evil;
> Forbids us then to taste, but his forbidding
> Commends thee more, while it infers the good
> By thee communicated, and our want. (*PL* 9.750-55)

It is only in succumbing to the hunger, to the lack, that Eve simultaneously finds subjectivity and death.

Chapter III

"mere moral babble": The Reemergence of the Flesh

Another locus for anxiety and the subsequent emergence of the abject in *Paradise Lost* is language. In Kristeva's psychoanalytic framework, language signals both the emergence of the subject and the entrance into the Symbolic:

> Communication brings my most intimate subjectivity into being for the other; and this act of judgment and supreme freedom, if it authenticates me, also delivers me over to death. (Kristeva 129-30)

For Kristeva, language is what delivers us over to death, since the emergence of the subject reveals that the subjectivity is based on the abject: "it is the Word that discloses the abject. But at the same time, the Word alone purifies from the abject" (Kristeva 23). In the Kristevan framework, the language that founds subjectivity is the language that establishes concrete boundaries between self and other:

> The non-distinctiveness of inside and outside would thus be unnamable, a border passable in both directions by pleasure and pain. Naming the latter, hence differentiating them, amounts to introducing language, which, just as it distinguishes pleasure from pain as it does all other oppositions, founds the separation inside/outside. (Kristeva 61)

It is Symbolic language that effects this separation between the inside and the outside and simultaneously invokes and holds the abject at bay. Kristeva introduces the Semiotic as a complement to the Symbolic; the Semiotic is a pre-discursive, pre-symbolic phase that emerges in and subtends language as excess or multiplicity: "Thus an image, word, or *sememe* (effect of meaning deriving from a specific group of words) may be invested with a 'plurality of significations and drive operation' not apparent in the pheno-text due to the effect of repression" (Lechte 144). The Semiotic is therefore representative of the time after birth and before the emergence of language and is linked with the maternal:

> The semiotic thus precedes all unities, binary oppositional structures and hierarchical forms of organization. . . It is the symbiotic space shared by the mother's and child's indistinguishable bodies. It follows the 'organization' of polymorphous perverse drives operating without respect for the reality principle, governed only by its own libidinal economy. (Grosz, *Sexual* 43)

Because it emerges before the full separation between mother and child, the Semiotic is the language of the feminine. Because the maternal body is the archetypal corporeal body, when the child is linked to the maternal body, he or she is linked to the corporeal. This changing female body corresponds to the proliferation of meaning in language: "women diffuse themselves according to modalities scarcely compatible with the framework of the ruling symbolics" (Irigaray 106). The Semiotic in language is multiplicity, rhythm, nonsense: "In textual terms it refers to the energies, rhythms, forces and corporeal residues necessary for representation" (Grosz, *Sexual* 43). Arguably, then, to exclude the multiplicity of meaning in a text is to exclude the Semiotic, the feminine in the text; and yet this changing body must be excluded, since it resists the Symbolic in that it embodies the body of death in the same way that unstable or multiple language is destabilizing to the Symbolic. This 'diffuse' characteristic makes the Semiotic language of babble, of excess, dangerous; and the boundary between the Semiotic and the Symbolic is the site of the abject in the text. Ultimately the abject is revealed in the text whenever language discloses the construction of the boundary between self and the other.

The Semiotic is always already part of the signifying structure, and these two forms of language, the Symbolic and the Semiotic, are interdependent: "All signifying practices and all social subjects are the effects of the interrelation of these terms" (Grosz, *Sexual* 42). This is writing as *pharmakon* that Derrida tells us "will always be apprehended as both antidote and poison" (235). Writing is both a way of establishing subjectivity through naming and a destabilizing force. Both the Symbolic and the Semiotic are necessary in writing, and it is the "supplementary discomfort stemming from the indecidability between the two" (Derrida 235) that is like the continual dialectic of desire and repulsion that characterizes the writer's relation to the abject.

Milton's work anticipates this Kristevan articulation of the Semiotic and the Symbolic by effecting an unnatural separation between the classical body and the body of death and between an Adamic language of pure referentiality and a polymorphous 'language' that demonstrates an instability of signification. Initially, Milton sets in place a signifying system that relies on Adamic language in order to establish subjectivity. In *Paradise Lost*, language clearly divides and bounds. The Symbolic is operative in *Paradise Lost* in as much as language is used to establish subjectivity: "Milton's introduction of 'my advent'rous Song. / That with no middle flight intends to soar,' . . . constitutes both a construction of subjectivity and an assertion of the subject's authority" (Esterhammer 33). A powerful example of the Symbolic is found in God's creation of the world. As Esterhammer points out, "the substance of the created universe was pre-existent and that divine creation was an act of circumscription and ordering" (106). God's word of creation orders Chaos "the world unborn" (7.220) and divides "Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace / Said then th'omnific Word, your discord end" (7.216-17). This verbal division is echoed by the material division which follows:

> and in his hand
> He took the eternal compasses, prepared
> In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
> This universe and all created things:
> One foot he centred, and the other turned
> Round through the vast profundity obscure,
> And said, Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,
> This be thy just circumference, O world. (*PL* 7.224-31)

Here, the Semiotic, chaos, is limited and ordered by the Symbolic, and this ordering is creation.

The Semiotic, by contrast, is the language of Babel, which is "a jangling noise of words unknown" (*PL* 12.51-55). Biblically, this multiplicity of language is a punishment sent from God in order to undermine the authority of those trying to usurp Divine power. It is imperative for the survival of the Symbolic that the Semiotic be suppressed, in the same way that the suppression of Chaos is essential for the creation of the world. Semiotic language must be contained since its emergence undermines the stability of Symbolic language in that if language can indeed be duplicitous and unstable, then the entire structure of language is unstable and potentially powerless to name or divide.

Angela Esterhammer[10] points out that visionary poets are

> victims of the subjectivity of language. An appeal to subjectivity is the only way to convey their sense of authority, yet subjectivity risks being exposed as always and only a function of language. In the same breath with the claim to authority comes an admission of limits: 'This can only be said by saying 'I,' and 'I' only has meaning in terms of what is being said. (33)

The interdependence of the Symbolic and the Semiotic locates Milton's Paradise in the realm of the inexpressible. It is difficult at best to comment on authorial intention, and it is impossible to state whether or not Milton attempted to create a viable Paradise with beings who have language/subjectivity and yet do not have death, or whether he was aware of the issues raised in the attempted separation of the Semiotic and the Symbolic. Esterhammer remarks that Milton's text, while operating in the Symbolic, "confront[s] the presumption of beginning, the uncertainty of name-giving, and the persistent problematic of creation in language" (89). Mikics, too, ascribes to Milton an ability to recognize the intricacies of language:

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[10] Angela Esterhammer in *Creating States: Studies in the Performative Language of John Milton and William Blake*, a study of performative language and visionary poetry, discusses performative language, whose "utterance brings about an action or alters the condition of the speaker, the addressee, or the environment" (4). However, she points out that J. L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* comes to the conclusion that in fact "all utterances, including the most classic examples of true-false propositions, manifest illocutionary or performative force" (4). Her discussion of performative language is therefore pertinent since it is possible to see performative utterances as an extension of the Symbolic as a method of asserting subjectivity.

> literary representation must discover that it is not the ambiguous, emotive fullness it seems to be but instead remains dependent, like the poet himself in his mortal blindness, on higher authority. In its practice of re-presentation, the Miltonic text is tempted by a rich, and richly delusive, sense of its own self-sufficiency. Yet the author's awareness of his text's trusting, but still equivocal and secondary, connection to God's word rescues him from Satanic arrogance by compelling him to find his work lacking in comparison with the original labor of divine Creation. (133)

Milton cannot recreate God's creation, and his representation is grounded in the knowledge of the body of death, of the Semiotic.

The language in Paradise is therefore both a Symbolic language of naming and a Semiotic invocation of excess. This Semiotic 'language' is double in the sense that often it is not simply used excessively, but its meaning or placement in the text has connotations of superfluity. The Semiotic emerges particularly when we encounter moments that evoke the corporeal in Paradise: moments concerned with sex, death, or hunger Symbolic language cannot maintain its hegemonic status in confrontation with death since its role is to name and define words in order to systematize, and therefore it breaks down. In an encounter with death, the Symbolic cannot name death or define it, since to do so is to link the speaking being with death and to establish death's primacy over the Symbolic. While Milton's larger argument is indeed that there is no excess, no body in Paradise, "the linguistic trappings of texts are often more telling than the explicit arguments" (Bynum xvi).

We need to here address the issue of multiplicity in Milton. One way in which the primacy of the Symbolic as Adamic language is recreated in Milton studies is by the insistence that Milton invokes only original etymological meanings (Ricks 110). Christopher Ricks writes of what is "surely the true meaning" (14), and MacCallum tells us that this resistance to multiple meanings is the very position of Milton who "[u]pholds the Protestant rejection of multiple meanings, rejects allegory as an instrument of exegesis, permits a compound sense but prefers types clearly established by the New Testament" (409).

This ideological position is the ideal spot from which to conclude that the language of Milton's Paradise is unfallen. Ricks comments: "With the Fall of Man, language falls too" (109). He mourns that "[t]he irrevocable Fall has degraded language too, and turned those innocent notes to tragic" (111). There is the valid argument that Adam's language suffers corruption after the Fall in *Paradise Lost* (Leonard, *Naming* 16), but it is erroneous to assume that further corruption in language is indicative of no previous corruption. Instead, the belief that the language of Paradise is unfallen is a way in which the multiplicity of the text is masked: "So one of the reasons why Milton often uses 'words in their proper and primary signification' (Newton) is because he can thereby re-create something of the pre-lapsarian state of language" (Ricks 110). This is based not only on the idea that there is an Adamic language in which a transparent relation between sign and referent exists, but also requires that the reader believe Milton when he tells us that man was "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (*PL* 2.99). Consistent with this position, Ricks explains away puns and word play which seem to prefigure the Fall as an "invoking of what is then deliberately excluded" (111). In this way the text is always contained and controlled by Ricks. In fact, the longing for the pure referenciality of the Adamic language that several Milton critics ascribe to Milton is a longing for what is of necessity beyond the text and excessive, and is thus linked with the Semiotic.

I want to argue that the Semiotic 'language' as "babble" is present in both *Paradise Lost* and *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle.* We have seen the way in which the corporeal body emerges and exposes its relationship with the mind. In the same way, the language of multiplicity emerges and complicates the Adamic language of naming, of power. Any cleaning up, or bounding, of terms tends to emphasize the vaporousness of the words themselves.

The interdependence of the Symbolic and the Semiotic is emphasized in *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*. The Lady is presented as a chaste, continent body who is 'saved' by her language:

> I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
> In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
> Would think to charm my judgement, as mine eyes,
> Obtruding false rules pranced in reason's garb.
> I hate when vice can bolt her arguments,
> And virtue has no tongue to check her pride:
> Imposter do not charge most innocent Nature,
> As if she would her children should be riotous
> With her abundance; she good caters
> Means her provision only to the good

That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance:
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and besetting share
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion (756-73)

In this speech the Lady defends her body as chaste by preaching control and temperance. She links the excessiveness of speech with the excesses of the world, and instead she counsels:

Fool do not boast,
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporeal rind
Thou hast immanacled. (662-65)

Here she upholds the primacy of the mind over the body and the primacy of temperance over excess. She defends her position in reasonable words and seemingly protects the integrity of both her mind and body. Importantly, the Lady separates the body and the mind in this speech and denies their interdependence. Her denial that the mind can be influenced by the body amounts to the separation of the Symbolic and the Semiotic. She also puts greater value on the mind, while the body is a "corporeal rind". In this way she prioritizes the Symbolic as mind. Separating the mind from the body is framed as a protective gesture in this passage, which supports Kristeva's theory that the suppression of the Semiotic is a way in which we can protect ourselves from our own bodies and their connection to death. Comus supports the position that the language of the Lady, her mind, is more powerful than her body: "She fables not, I feel that I do fear / Her words set off by some superior power" (800-01). According to the Lady and Comus, it is the language of temperance that has primacy over the body, and this language allows the subject to establish 'his' being.

However, the emergence of the body, of the semiotic, and its relationship to the mind are evident at the end of the poem when the Lady is stuck to the seat which is "Smeared with gums of glutinous heat" (917). If we interpret these as the Lady's own gums, then the possibility arises that this is a woman who is overcome with desire, with a physical manifestation of her own loss of control. This moment is a moment when the Lady is controlled, or at least influenced, by desire and her body. The primacy of the body here is a reminder that the body and mind are linked, and the emergence of the corporeal body can thus be understood as the emergence of the Semiotic.

The appearance of the corporeal body introduces instability into the preceding Symbolic discourse. This triumph of the body reveals that the speech of the Lady is "mere moral babble" (Comus 807), and the "sage / And serious doctrine" (786-87) of the Symbolic dissolves. The Lady even hints that she is in possession of an excess amount of words: "Shall I go on? / Or have I said enough?" (779-80). The Lady does continue her speech, and the self-reflexive awareness of the excess is a precursor of the excess of the body which is to follow. She is reduced to the "gay rhetoric" (790) of which she accuses Comus.

We can also see the emergence of the Semiotic in *Paradise Lost,* and, as in *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*, the importance of the Symbolic discourse is foregrounded. In particular, the act of naming in Paradise is established as an instance of Symbolic power. In his book *Reconstructing Literature in an Ideological Age*, Daniel Ritchie strenuously opposes all inferences that the act of naming in Paradise is an act of control. He does however concede that "naming is Adam's way of establishing his relation with the world and with himself" (163). This, it seems to me, is entirely the point. Adam's act of naming is an assertion of personhood:

> Thus far to try thee, Adam, I was pleased,
> And find thee knowing not of beasts alone,
> Which thou hast rightly named, but of thyself. (*PL* 8.437-39)

Naming is the language that supports the formation of the autonomous subject. Of course, naming also allows Adam to realize his own lack. It is in naming the animals that Adam comes to see that he is not complete:

> As thus he spake, each bird and beast behold
> Approaching two and two, these cow'ring low
> With blandishment, each bird stooped on his wing.
> I named them, as they passed, and understood
> Their nature, with such knowledge God endued
> My sudden apprehension: but in these
> I found not what methought I wanted still. (*PL* 8.349-55)

Here we can see the way in which the language of naming, the Symbolic, is tied to the Semiotic, since subjectivity and the Semiotic are so intimately connected. The assertion of subjectivity must come through the multiplicity of language in much the same way that the subject must emerge from the maternal body.

We can also see the Semiotic in the naming of Eve in Paradise. In Genesis, Eve is not called Eve until after the Fall (Leonard, *Naming* 35), but Milton moves the naming of Eve into Paradise. Ritchie writes: "It is significant, first of all, that Milton departs from the biblical chronology in granting her the name before the fall. This means that the association of 'Eve' with 'evil' is a postlapsarian one" (173). This assumption again relies on the supposition that Milton has access to unfallen language. If indeed Milton is aware of the connotations of evil that the name Eve implies, then Adam's naming of Eve recognizes that the need for subjectivity, for naming, is coexistent with death.

As discussed above, multiplicity is associated with the Semiotic, and multiplicity invades Milton's text in several guises. It can betray itself through an excess of words or through multiple meanings of words. "Wanton," for instance, is a word whose associations with sex locate it at a node of anxiety. Specifically, the language of excess, the language of the body, emerges in the text in Milton's extensive use of the word wanton. Its very presence in the text ten times[11] is a sign of the excess that pervades the text, despite Milton's assertion that life in Paradise is tempered:

> They eat, they drink, and in communion sweet
> Quaff immortality and joy, secure
> Of surfeit where full measure only bounds

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[11] Charles Cleveland tells us that "wanton" is found in *Paradise Lost* in 1.414. 454, 4.306, 629, 768, 9.211, 11.583. "Wanton'd" is found in 5.295 and wantonly in 9.1015. "Wantonness" is found in 11.795 (293)

Excess. (*PL* 5.637-40)

While excess is invoked in this passage, it is bounded by "full measure." Life in the Garden is not excessive but is instead limited and tempered. These limits, as we have seen, form the basis of subjectivity in the text. While the Symbolic is upheld in this way, excess is still present in the text. The word "wanton" is linked with the notion of excess through its very meaning. Wanton can mean "To indulge in extravagances of language or thought" (OED $_{2b}$).

Multiplicity and excess are also suggested by the fact that various meanings of the word "wanton" are invoked in the passages in which the word appears:

> She as a veil down to the slender waist
> 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,
> And by her yielded, by him best received,
> Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
> And sweet reluctant amorous delay. (*PL* 4.305-11)

This passage is a description of Eve that identifies her as desirable and precedes sexual contact. Because of the association with sexual desire, the definition of "wanton" as "[l]ascivious, unchaste, lewd" (OED$_2$) is invoked. To increase the association of "wanton" with changeableness, in this passage we have the word "wanton" juxtaposed with words signifying movement. The "wanton ringlets waved," and two lines later, we find the word "sway," which suggests a moving body. These words invoke meanings of wanton that suggest change including "[c]apricious, frivolous, giddy" (OED$_6$), and "[o]f a material substance: changeable" (OED). Simultaneously, the use of the word "wanton" to modify "ringlets" suggests that the meaning of wanton here is not pejorative. The multiplicity shown by the word is itself a destabilizing force.

While some words suggest multiple meanings through their contextualization, Milton not only uses words which suggest excess but also structures language in such a way that the juxtaposition of meanings replays the tension between inside and outside. The phrase "coy submission" (4.310) implies that Eve may be acting the part of submission[12] and adds to the portrait of Eve as a changeable and multiple creature, but the very structure of these words is also a location of the emergence of the corporeal body in language. Their juxtaposition creates an oxymoronic structure which suggests tension in the meanings of the words. "Coy" can mean "[u]nwilling to commit oneself; archly reticent or evasive" (OED$_{2f}$), while "submission" implies a willingness and a malleability. The clash of these two terms represents the clash between the Semiotic and the Symbolic and their interdependence.

Another juxtaposition of words which demonstrates this tension is "modest pride" (4.310). The surface meaning of the phrase "modest pride" is fitting or appropriate sexual desire, yet there is a way in which modest and pride are opposites and this phrase is oxymoronic. There is another meaning of "pride" which increases the tension between these words since pride can mean "[s]exual desire, 'heat'; esp. in female animals" (OED$_{11}$). The juxtaposition of these opposite terms is another expression of the changeableness of Eve, who is both modest and proud, coy and submissive, but it is also the expression of the Semiotic within the Symbolic.

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[12] The word "coy" is defined as "Displaying modest backwardness or shyness (sometimes with emphasis on the displaying)" (OED$_{2a}$).

Eve is not the only location for the emergence of the Semiotic. As in the preceding chapter, hunger and its link with the abject are also nodes of anxiety and Milton's language reflects the interdependence of the Semiotic and Symbolic as it relates to food and hunger. Milton writes of "wholesome thirst and appetite" (*PL* 4.330). The juxtaposition of words which indicate lack with the word "wholesome," a word indicating entirety, is a signal of the potentially fracturing effect of hunger and thirst in Paradise. In attempting to make Adam and Eve whole, Milton draws attention to the oxymoron implicit in this statement. Not only does this juxtaposition imply a lack in Adam and Eve but also implies a lack in language. His use of "wholesome" suggests indeed that there is a lack in the very words "hunger" and "thirst" which must be filled by other words, whole words. The words "thirst" and "appetite" cannot stand alone and must be completed or controlled by something "whole." Of course, this control is not successful since the very gesture of trying to control results in an excess of language.

Hunger and thirst are again mentioned in Book Five:

> And Eve within, due at her hour prepared
> For dinner savoury fruits, of taste to please
> True appetite, and not disrelish thirst
> Of nectarous draughts between, from milky stream,
> Berry or grape. (5.303-07)

Here thirst and appetite are again a locus of anxiety. In this passage there is the curious construction of "not disrelish thirst." Milton tries to banish thirst in this construction by preceding it with a negation. It is as though he tries to contain the word in boundaries, but the word nonetheless appears. Similarly, appetite is preceded and modified by the word "true." Again there is the connotation of wholeness in conjunction with lack. True can mean "[r]eliable; constant" (OED_{1d}), and this insistence on what is constant and has no variation is a reassertion of the control of the Symbolic and the simultaneous invoking of the Semiotic.

It is at the point when language intersects with death that language reaches its limitations. The Symbolic cannot maintain stability in the face of death. Adam tries to figure death but he cannot know what it is:

> This one, this easy charge, of all the trees
> In Paradise that bear delicious fruit
> So various, not to taste that only Tree
> Of Knowledge, planted by the Tree of Life,
> So near grows death to life, whate'er death is,
> Some dreadful thing no doubt; for well though know'st
> God hath pronounced it death to taste that Tree. (*PL* 4.421-27)

Here Adam tries to distance himself from death, but he does so by pronouncing the word "death." He has possession of the word but not the referent. The phrase "whate'er death is" provides another instance where the Semiotic enters the garden since Adam here acknowledges the fact that death cannot be represented, and therefore the power of the Symbolic is destabilized. Death is unrepresentable since the word can be said, yet what it represents cannot be thought:

> Death is thus necessarily constructed by a culture; it grounds the many ways a culture stabilizes and represents itself, and yet it always does so as a signifier with an incessantly receding, ungraspable signified, always pointing to other signifiers, other means of representing what finally is just absent. Representations of death thus often serve as metatropes for the process of representation itself: its necessity, its excess, its failure, and its uses for the polis. (Bronfen 4)

Because death is unrepresentable, it "stands as a challenge to all our systems of meaning, order, governance, and civilization" (Bronfen 4). Death challenges the Symbolic and resists classification which would render it 'safe'. Instead it is always lurking since "[a]lthough death poses a metaphysical problem, it is a physical event. It is real, the referent that texts may point to but not touch. As such it is also uncanny, the return of the repressed, the excess that is beyond the text and to which the text aspires even as it aims to surpass it in potency" (Bronfen 20). This return of death is the return of the Semiotic.

The anxiety surrounding the semiotic reaches its climax in the temptation scene. It is during the temptation of Eve that we see most clearly the role of language and its link with the Semiotic. Language in the serpent is an aberration: it is excessive. His flattery of Eve is also excessive: "But all that fair and good in thy divine / Semblance, and in thy beauty's Heav'nly ray / United I beheld" (9.606-608). Eve recognizes that Satan's language is superfluous: "Serpent, thy overpraising leaves in doubt / The virtue of that fruit, in thee first proved" (9.615-16). Satan's excessive language is a sign to Eve that his language is not reliable. This identification of excess with Satan continues into the temptation scene when he tempts Eve with images of surfeit and desire:

> To satisfy the sharp desire I had
> Of tasting those fair apples, I resolved
> Not to defer; hunger and thirst at once,
> Powerful persuaders, quickened at the scent
> Of that alluring fruit, urged me so keen. (4.584-88)

Satan claims that the Tree has given him "life more perfect" (9.689). Gone are the boundaries which limited life in the garden to perfect; it is now "more perfect."

The tree of knowledge is a symbol of the dividing power of the Symbolic in this text. God's Symbolic language names this tree and divides it from the rest of the garden. Eve echoes this Symbolic division: "But of this tree we may not taste nor touch; / God so commanded, and left that command / Sole daughter of his voice" (9.651-53). This division is countered through Satan's invocation of desire and, finally, the Semiotic emerges at the moment when Eve eats the fruit. This transgressive gesture introduces death and joins body and mind: "what hinders then / To reach, and feed at once both body and mind" (9.778-79).

The Semiotic is present in any written text since "[a]ny representational discourse implies the muteness, absence, nonbeing—in short, the death—of the object it seeks to designate" (Bronfen 7). In both *Paradise Lost* and *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*, the text is the site of tension caused by the simultaneous presence of the Symbolic and the Semiotic. The Symbolic is presented as a powerful force responsible for subjectivity: "Language, both as the divine instrument of creation and as a social construct, imposes divisions on chaos" (Esterhammer 108). Yet chaos, as a representative of the semiotic, remains vital and unfettered:

> Significantly, chaos continues to exist at the perimeter of the created universe of *Paradise Lost*, as a place, a living entity, and a potential threat. (Esterhammer 110)

The presence of Chaos as an ever present force in *Paradise Lost* is a figure for the necessary interdependence of both: the Symbolic and the Semiotic, and the grotesque body and the classical body. As the liminal space between these entities, the abject is a necessary component of discourse.

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