

Georgia State University
ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

English Dissertations

Department of English

5-2-2018

Performing Valor, Redeeming Virtue

Karen Dodson

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss

Recommended Citation

Dodson, Karen, "Performing Valor, Redeeming Virtue." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2018.
https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss/194

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

1 PERFORMING VALOR, REDEEMING VIRTUE

by

KAREN DODSON

Under the Direction of Malinda Snow, PhD

ABSTRACT

John Milton dedicated his life to forming a path to virtue for men to follow that included education, contemplation, divine illumination, and right reason. Milton promises that his path will lead others to a life of reason and a paradise within. Eighteenth-century women responded to Milton's formula for virtue and appropriated his path for their own enlightenment. This project examines the way in which three eighteenth-century women, Mary Astell, Lady Mary Chudleigh, and Elizabeth Carter, incorporated Milton's path to virtue into their writing and into their lives to redefine virtue for women.

INDEX WORDS: Milton, Contemplation, Right reason, Virtue, Eighteenth Century, Women

PERFORMING VALOR, REDEEMING VIRTUE

by

KAREN DODSON

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2018

Copyright by
Karen Dodson
2018

PERFORMING VALOR, REDEEMING VIRTUE

by

KAREN DODSON

Committee Chair: Malinda Snow

Committee: Paul Schmidt

Paul Voss

Commented [WU1]: Only the first and last name of your committee members should be listed here. Please do not include their titles. In other words, do not list "Dr." or "Ph.D." here.

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

May 2018

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who never let me give up on my dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, Dr. Snow, for guiding me and believing in me. Thank you, Drs. Schmidt and Voss for your assistance and support. Thank you to my friends and colleagues at the University of North Georgia for a thousand words of encouragement. And, thank you God, for my sobriety and for allowing me to live to finish.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2 CHAPTER ONE: MILTON’S PATH TO VIRTUE	13
1.1 Contemplation.....	14
1.2 Reason and Choice.....	17
1.3 Milton’s Eve and Reason.....	26
1.4 Redeeming Virtue	42
3 CHAPTER TWO – MARY ASTELL AND THE “HAPPY RETREAT”.....	52
1.5 Stoicism and Happiness.....	58
1.6 Milton’s Influence	62
1.7 The Noise of Folly.....	65
1.8 A Marriage of True Minds.....	69
1.9 Contemplation.....	75
1.10 Reason and Choice.....	82
1.11 Performing Valor	85
4 CHAPTER THREE – VALUE AND VIRTUE: LADY MARY CHUDLEIGH’S LIFE SERMON.....	89
1.12 Stoicism and Forbearance.....	95
1.13 Milton’s Influence	97

Commented [WU2]: Do not delete the table of contents. This table of contents is already formatted. Instead, you will update your headings in the document and then right click the table of contents and select “update field”. Then, you will select “entire table”.

1.14	Marriage, not Slavery	103
1.15	Contemplation	112
1.16	Reason and Choice	119
1.17	Performing Valor	121
5	CHAPTER FOUR – ELIZABETH CARTER: REDEEMING FEMININE	
VALOR	125
1.18	The Question of Marriage	131
1.19	Stoicism and Epictetus.....	132
1.20	The Contemplative Scholar.....	139
1.21	Virtue and Liberty	154
1.22	Performing Valor	161
6	AFTERWORD: A LEGACY OF VALOR AND VIRTUE.....	166
CONCLUSION	177
WORKS CITED.	179

2 INTRODUCTION

As the Age of Reason dawns in the long eighteenth century, Milton's work has a profound influence on subsequent writers, both poetically and politically. Raymond Dexter Havens provides an exhaustive representation of Milton's influence on prosody and reception of eighteenth-century poets in *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (1961). Havens does not reveal any particular influence Milton's theology or epistemology had on women writers, however. Furthermore, Dustin Griffin, in the introduction to *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, asserts that Havens' book sets out the "most comprehensive argument for Milton's bad influence," (1) due to the extensive and often inferior imitation of his diction and prosody. Even though Griffin provides a good deal of information about Milton's political and poetic influence on subsequent male writers, he does not include any of the women writers in his assertions of Milton's great attempt to recover paradise.

T. S. Eliot and Harold Bloom also had a great deal to say about Milton's influence, for better or for worse, on subsequent poets. Bloom observes in his popular work *The Anxiety of Influence* that "the great poets of the English Renaissance are not matched by their Enlightened descendants" (10). He further suggests that "Milton may be said to have fathered the poetry that we call post-Enlightenment or Romantic, the poetry that takes as its obsessive theme the power of the mind over the universe of death" (35). Bloom insists that by poetic influence, he does "not mean the transmission of ideas and images from earlier to later poets" (71); however, many writers who follow Milton indeed take up his "ideas" and "images" concerning the "power of the mind." In fact, the very ideology that Milton proposes spurs many of the women writers of the eighteenth-century to emulate him. T. S. Eliot claims that "no other English poet, not Wordsworth, or Shelley, lived through or took sides in such momentous events as did Milton; of

no other poet is it so difficult to consider the poetry simply as poetry” (188); yet, the women who discover in Milton a shared hope of a restored human virtue faced their own political and cultural upheaval in their struggle for dignity and equality. And even though, according to Eliot, “Milton made a great epic impossible for succeeding generations” (191), many writers adopt his ideas and his images as their own. Whereas scholars of the past have noted Milton’s influence on poetry and language, I explore the powerful epistemology that Milton provides women writers of the eighteenth-century, and I establish that his ideology and the image of a restored, internal paradise answers their call for a redefinition of a virtuous humanity that includes women. Moreover, Milton’s treatment of his female characters, the Lady in *A Masque at Ludlow Castle* and Eve in *Paradise Lost*, affords subsequent writers a representation of three-dimensional women whom they may emulate. Milton’s characterizations of the Edenic characters exceed those representations of women found in scripture and the traditional descriptions of frail and mentally inferior women.

Critics in the past failed to recognize or acknowledge that Milton’s epistemological and theological views are not bound by gender. The same universal influence that inspired Cowper and Dryden touched the imaginations of Mary Astell, Lady Mary Chudleigh, and Elizabeth Carter. David Fairer suggests that in *Paradise Lost*, Milton “explored not only the widest possible reach of history and geography, but also the basic human experiences and emotions in their primal form” (184). Eighteenth-century women viewed themselves as part of that humanity, with the same experiences and emotions that affected their male counterparts.

One of the more obvious Miltonic explorations concerns the fall of humanity through the disobedience of Adam and Eve in his famous epic. Many eighteenth-century writers, especially sentimental novelists, focus on his haunting portrayal of a fallen Eve, duped by a snake-in-the-

grass rogue, and the consequences of her resistance to physical containment and patriarchal rule. Since chastity was the only significant virtue afforded women in this time period, heroines who negotiate the perils of virginal virtue echo through novels from Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, to Oliver Goldsmith's Olivia Wakefield, to Jane Austen's Lydia Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* and Maria Bertram Rushworth in *Mansfield Park*. These novels portray the disastrous familial consequences of a fallen woman. According to Theodore Plunkett's *A Concise History of the Common Law*, English marriages, based on ancient Anglo-Saxon marriage contracts, "consisted of the sale by the woman's kinfolk of the jurisdiction or guardianship over her to the prospective husband" (628), and the purity of the bride was essential to the successful negotiation of the contract. The notion of feminine purity as a precious commodity later leads Samuel Johnson to comment: "Consider of what importance to society the chastity of women is. Upon that all the property in the world depends" (Boswell 33). Accordingly, the tantalizing possibility of an easily seduced maiden as the downfall of family and community fortune permeates many of eighteenth-century works.

These tantalizing tales of maidens and fallen women portray Milton's Eve as the tragic figure in human experience who cannot negotiate temptation without male guardianship. Robert A. Erickson asserts, "To understand more fully the importance of Milton's Eve to the writers of early modern fiction, we must pause to consider her relationship to *Fancy* or *Phantasia*, one of the three major components of the mind" (121). Erickson further observes that Adam's confession to Raphael in Book VIII of *Paradise Lost*, "But apt mind or fancy is apt to rove / Uncheckt, and of her roving is no end; / Till warn'd, or by experience taught, she learn" (188-90), contains the seeds of eighteenth-century fictional depictions of women: Milton "gives Aphra Behn a cue for the female 'Rover,' proleptically outlines the plot of Haywood's *Fantomina*, and

provides a rationale for the content of the eighteenth-century novel from Defoe to Sterne” (122-23). The sheer volume of work utilizing this theme of a woman’s loss of chastity or physical virtue places Milton’s Eve, just like the Eve of Genesis before her, as the mother of fallen women and as the warning to any women who would attempt to escape the confinement of hierarchal rule.

Some eighteenth-century women writers, however, focus on examining their own rational minds and answer Milton’s call to search out the scattered vestiges of truth in order to discover the “paradise within” promised in his epic *Paradise Lost*, adopting his formula for religious liberty and virtue through education and right reason. According to Norma Clarke, “Intelligent women were able to benefit from a rhetoric that had been growing in strength since the 1690s which argued that women’s ‘follies’ and ‘weakness’ could be corrected by education” (39). All of the learned women who represent a reordering of feminine virtue were well aware of Milton’s recurring themes of free will, right reason, and personal virtue; his epistemological ideas become the means by which these writers begin to redefine virtue for women.

Milton, from his earliest works, creates a cognitive path for climbing out of the spiritual darkness caused by the fall of Adam and Eve. He draws upon the same sentiment that Sir Philip Sidney expresses in his *Apology for Poetry* (1595), that humanity suffers from an unrighteous and clouded reason, as well as a corrupt will, and that the entire purpose of learning is to bring us to right reason, or sophrosyne, in as “high perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of” (140). In *Of Education* Milton echoes Sidney’s sentiment:

The end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know
God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him

as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which, being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection. (971)

According to Milton, this true virtue comes from right reason and is a result of contemplation, discipline, study, and divine illumination; consequently, these components combine to bring about virtue through proairesis. Furthermore, right reason is the only weapon against amazement and spiritual darkness, the natural consequences of the fall. According to Stephen M. Fallon, in a footnote to *Paradise Lost*, right reason is defined by “the concept of an *a priori* faculty of moral judgment from the *recta ratio* of Stoic philosophy” (446); he also points out Milton’s quote from Cicero: “Right reason [is] derived from divine will which commands what is right and forbids what is wrong” (*Philippics* 11.12.28). In an era when women were viewed by many as irrational creatures, incapable of reason, some eighteenth-century women writers embrace Milton’s ideology and path to virtue as their own and insist that the daughters of Eve may redeem the paradise within.

For eighteenth-century women writers, Milton’s work anticipates the exploration of another component of the human mind, right reason, as opposed to the fanciful thinking traditionally associated with women. In his treatise *Areopagitica*, Milton identifies a “fifth essence, the breath of reason itself” (931), the place of divine illumination that allows for wisdom from heaven. Women such as Mary Astell, Lady Mary Chudleigh, and Elizabeth Carter determine that this place of reason is available to women as well as men if they seek it. In their search for the Truth, which according to Milton had been hewed “into a thousand pieces, and scattered to the four winds,” these three women, “the sad friends of Truth, such as dare appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them” (*Areopagitica* 955). Within the

scholarship concerning Milton's contribution to eighteenth-century thought and Milton's representation of women in his work, my contribution to the treasury of knowledge and scholarship examines the powerful influence of Milton's epistemological and theological philosophy of right reason and virtue on the women writers of the Restoration and eighteenth century.

Whereas Milton scholarship demands a rigorous sifting of hundreds of years of criticism that began his lifetime, the eighteenth-century women writers in this study only came into critical vogue late in the twentieth century. Until recently, many of the more obscure works of Astell, Chudleigh, and Carter were only available online in databases such as *Early English Books Online* and *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*. Fortunately, scholars such as Patricia Springborg and Margaret J. Ezell have edited their work with insightful commentary. Little criticism exists, however, that directly links Milton's views of virtue and eighteenth-century women, so an exploration of his influence on them breaks original ground. I have, however, found sufficient evidence that these women read Milton and were familiar with his ideology. Moreover, a study of women in the long eighteenth century requires a feminist viewpoint. For many feminist critics, Milton's description of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* reinforces his appearance of misogyny. In the passage that excited twentieth-century feminists, wherein Satan views Adam and Eve, Adam "seemed / For contemplation he and valor formed" and / For softness she [Eve] and sweet attractive grace" (IV.296-98). Created "He for God only, she for God in him" (*PL* IV.299), the prelapsarian couple appear to embody a traditional patriarchal hierarchy. However, these scholars underestimate the gravity of Eve's sufficiency to stand, the same posture allowed her husband; Eve fails, but Milton allows her access to the "dust and heat" of the test. Even though Eve's attempt to gain forbidden knowledge ends tragically for her

character, Milton's representation of the first mother eclipses the traditional theological impression of a female simpleton who simply eats forbidden fruit because it looks good. Milton's Eve possesses the thoughtful and expressive complexity of a rational creature, who, even after failing to resist the temptation of the devil, ushers in a postlapsarian theology of redemption and an internal paradise.

Most recent Milton criticism debunks the late twentieth-century feminist presumptions concerning his misogynist representation of Eve and her role in his epic. First and foremost, in *Feminist Milton*, a definitive work in which he parodies Blake's celebration of Satan and his suggestion that Milton was "of Eve's party and knows it full well" (98), Joseph Wittreich sets to rest most issues concerning Milton's association with the "woman question" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

What that response now is, or seems to be, in its apprehension of *Paradise Lost* as a principal document of and powerful sanction for patriarchal culture is simply different from what in Milton's century and in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it had been – at least for women who then taking 'hold of the signs and symbols of a male-dominated culture...made them speak female truths to other women.' *Paradise Lost* especially was regarded as a woman's text – not just one through which women could challenge the cherished beliefs of Milton's male readers, but one through which Milton himself had challenged those beliefs by fashioning a new female ideal with the intention of forging a new social and political reality. (xii)

Wittreich further observes that Milton's poetry and prose seem "to have held an important place within the zone of female consciousness and to have elicited from many women a shared

understanding,” and his influence was revealed, “not in commentaries on Milton but in treatises on education and politics, particularly sexual politics, where Milton’s writings are rifled for proof-texts” (xix). In fact, Shannon Miller points out that Milton’s eighteenth-century women readers who “were rising up against the patriarchal tradition of Scripture saw Milton himself as an ally in, not antagonist to, such an enterprise” (4). Furthermore, any examination of women’s writing in this period absent the influence of male authors tends “to mute, rather than explore, the sustained intertextuality of male and female writers throughout the Renaissance” (Miller 3). In addition, William Shullenberger proposes that “equating patriarchy with misogyny, feminist critics to this point have neglected elements in the subtext, because the prospect of finding their own critical idealism confirmed and encouraged by so powerful a patriarchal text would be embarrassing” (70). Shullenberger further notes that in Book III of *Paradise Lost*, God foreshadows the first gracious human action after the Fall, when Eve breaks the grip of self-hatred and mutual accusation by subordinating herself, by pleading Adam’s forgiveness, and by offering her own life as a sacrifice out of her love for Adam, even as the Son had offered his in the heavenly council scene. (76)

The subtext that accompanies the plot of a postlapsarian Eve grants us a glimpse of a woman who fully embraces her part in the fall, sees the possibility of future reparation, and foresees her role in the redemption of humankind: “By me the promised seed shall all restore” (*PL XII.623*). As Patrick J. McGrath observes,

The final words spoken by a character in *Paradise Lost* belong to Eve. Her speech performs the important function of describing Christian soteriology¹...In addition to anticipating this promise, Eve is also given, as Michael Schoenfeldt notes, the “crucial task” of articulating a version of the paradise within. (72)

Eve not only takes on the blame for the fall, she also assumes a sacrificial posture that portends the sacrifice of Christ. She becomes the wiser and virtuous version of a once-gullible woman. In the contemplative, reflective, and obedient Eve we find the origins of what the eighteenth-century woman seeks – the future promise of freedom within.

In addition to acknowledging the recent feminist scholarship concerning Milton and his female readers, I take a cultural view of Milton’s epistemological and theological influence on women writers and their subsequent sociopolitical use of his ideology in matters of liberty and virtue. According to a recent article by Anne-Julia Zwierlein, Milton’s work insists “on the learning process that is needed for the virtuous and innocent to fend off mendacity...a conviction that through education, the effects of the fall, irreversible postlapsarian corruption, can be redressed” (206). The reparation of the fall requires a virtue that transcends what women were traditionally afforded in their time, an escape from the confusion of amazement through divine illumination and right reason. A near contemporary of Milton’s, Mary Astell proposes an educated woman who becomes fit for more than polite society; Lady Mary Chudleigh, heavily influenced by both Milton and Astell, imagines a virtuous woman who enjoys learning and gains knowledge through study; and Elizabeth Carter, the female counterpart of the educated Milton,

¹ Soteriology is the study of the Christian doctrine of salvation, specifically the role of the Savior (soter) as the promised seed of woman. Eve’s speech in the final scene of Book XII accounts the dream-vision God gives her: “though all by me is lost, / Such favor I unworthy am vouchsafed, / By me the promised seed shall all restore” (621-23).

lives out the ideal of an educated, virtuous woman who brings her unique talents to cultural concerns. Each of these women admonishes other women to abandon the vanities of a virtue founded on chastity alone, to contemplate creation and the goodness of God, and, through reflection and betterment of mind, to strengthen their internal virtue, which then radiates outward from them as a reflection of a redefinition of their virtuous nature. In these endeavors, they embrace Raphael's description to Adam of the best way to live in a fallen world and make it their own:

Only add

Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,

Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,

By name to be called charity, the soul

Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath

To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess

A paradise within thee, happier far. (XII.581-87)

In Chapter One, I introduce Milton's insistence on education and contemplation as the means to receiving divine illumination and right reason. He explains the darkened aspect of the human mind after the fall and the necessity of the messiah's redemptive act of restoring human reason through the Spirit of Truth. These concepts form a path to virtue for all men who desire virtue and proairesis, a path that leads to a "paradise within." Whether Milton meant his formula for women as well as men is debatable; however, his character Eve introduces the redemption of the human mind at the end of his epic *Paradise Lost*. Women of the Eighteenth Century appropriate both Eve's redemptive language and Milton's definition of virtue.

In Chapter Two, I explore Milton's influence in the writing of Mary Astell, who advocates for women's education in the early eighteenth century. Astell follows the formula for virtue that Milton sets out in his work, and then she preaches the new definition of virtue for other women. Astell asks women to take responsibility for their own virtue through first abandoning the fanciful role assigned to them by their society, and then embarking on a studious and charitable life.

In Chapter Three, I examine both Milton's and Astell's influence in the work of Lady Mary Chudleigh. Chudleigh takes up the mantle of admonition from Astell in calling for a better definition of virtue for women and questions the consequence of Eve's disobedience on women alone. She applies many of Milton's ideas concerning the redemption of the human mind to the inferior status of women, proving through her own skill that women share an equal mental capacity with men. Chudleigh devotes her life and talent to improving women's lives by her arguments for intellectual liberty and virtuous living.

In Chapter Four, I demonstrate that Elizabeth Carter's extraordinary life as one of England's prominent scholars is a result of her following the path forged by Milton's ideology and example, as well as the influence of Astell and Chudleigh. Carter embraces her education, just as Astell once dreamed that women could. Like Astell and Chudleigh, Carter calls for letting go of the fancy that distracts women from their path to intellectual and spiritual freedom. Her life exemplifies the virtue that moves far beyond the accomplishments allowed women of her time.

In an Afterword, I explore the influence of Milton, Astell, Chudleigh, and Carter on women who introduce new ideas of virtue to nineteenth-century women. Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft benefit from the work of their predecessors and seek out opportunities for social

reform. More provides education to poor children, fights slavery in the abolition movement, and advocates for charitable causes. Wollstonecraft takes on the establishment and fights for equal rights for women's education.

3 CHAPTER ONE: MILTON'S PATH TO VIRTUE

“I cannot praise a fugitive or cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed,
 that never sallies out and sees *her* adversary, but slinks out of the race
 where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.”

(Areopagitica 939, emphasis mine)

From his own early education and reading, Milton formed his ideology surrounding education, contemplation, right reason, and virtue. According to Barbara K. Lewalski, “He was reared in a bourgeois Puritan milieu that fostered in him qualities of self-discipline, diligent preparation for one’s intended vocation, and responsibility before God for the development and use of one’s talents” (1). Milton’s grandfather was a Roman Catholic, who “cast out and disinherited” Milton’s father when he was caught “reading an English Bible” (Lewalski 2), so Milton’s earliest comprehension of radical thought came directly from his father. Because of his father’s prosperity, and because he was a male, Milton received an admirable education at St. Paul’s, Cambridge, and through multiple private tutors. Like his female successors’ educations, moreover, Milton’s learning process included the great classical writers of the past: Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, Homer, Virgil, Cicero, Horace, Juvenal, and many other Greek and Roman masters. The difference that Milton exhibited as a student of the classics was that “in a very real sense Milton saw Homer and Virgil and Cicero and Ovid and several other great poets and thinkers as his contemporaries” (Lewalski xii). He was proficient, of course, in the Greek and Latin languages, having had the basis of a traditional education for young men at the time, but his father also gave him access to French, Italian, and Hebrew through his tutors.

From the study of classical languages and literature, specifically studying great works in the languages in which they were originally written, Milton found his poetic and political vocation early in life. Furthermore, he found in his study of the Stoics, and in his exposure to the later form of Stoicism, the Cambridge Platonists, a formal philosophy that would later inform his own works – the significance of reason in faith – and, most importantly, the existence of intellectual contemplation.

Milton includes these foundational principles, to some degree, in all his major works. The author's entire theology rests on his worldview of reason and free will, and the notion that the human mind must have divine help to exercise a proper and reasonable will. Milton's epistemological philosophy aligns with those of Augustine and Descartes, who propose an internal source of enlightenment, and directly opposes the empiricism of Frances Bacon and would oppose the later inductive reasoning of David Hume. Milton proposes an internal and divine illumination to all who search for Truth through contemplation and right reason.

1.1 Contemplation

Milton expresses the importance of contemplation and the inner light of right reason to the practice of virtue in some of his earliest work. For example, in *Proclusion VII* (1632), a rhetorical and oratory exercise he performed as part of his Cambridge curriculum, he states,

This eternal life, as almost everyone admits, is to be found in contemplation alone, by which the mind is uplifted, without the aid of the body, and gathered within itself so that it attains, to its inexpressible joy, a life akin to that of the immortal gods. (795)

Eternity presides in that part of the mind that connects with providence in moments of contemplation. In the same Prologue, Milton further differentiates between the cognizance of the intellect, which involves “every art and science,” and the will, “which is the home and sanctuary of uprightness” (796-97). The light of the intellect shines on the will as “with a borrowed light, even as the moon does” (797). This borrowed light is the divine illumination of right reason.

Additionally, proper contemplation requires extensive learning, as Milton asserts in *The Reason of Church Government* (1642): whoever would “frame a discipline” must

be of such a one as is a true knower of himself, and himself in whom contemplation and practice, wit, prudence, fortitude, and eloquence must be rarely met, both to comprehend the hidden causes of things, and span in his thoughts all the various effects that passion or complexion can work in man’s nature. (753)

Milton himself practiced contemplation and sought to know “the hidden causes of things” as part of his daily study. One of his early biographers, John Aubrey, notes: “He was an early riser <scil. at 4 a clock *mané*>²; yea, after he lost his sight. He had a man read to him. The first thing he read was the Hebrew bible, and that was at 4.h. *mané*, ½ h. plus. Then he contemplated” (xxviii). His early morning study and contemplation required great discipline, and only after “devoting some time to quiet contemplation, Milton was then ready to compose” (Dobranski, “Milton’s Social Life” 19). Reflecting on the trouble in Milton’s first marriage, Aubrey states:

Two opinions do not well on the same bolster. She was a ...Royalist, and went to her mother to the King’s quarters, near Oxford. I have perhaps so much charity to

² Scil...*mané*, It is well known (*scilicet*)...in the morning.

her that she might not wrong his bed: but what man, especially contemplative, would like to have a young wife environed and stormed by the sons of Mars, and those of the enemy's party? (xxv-xxvi)

Later in *Reason of Church Government*, Milton asserts, "For there is not that thing in the world of more grave and urgent importance throughout the whole life of man then is discipline" (751). He further compares the "consecrating of Temples, carpets and tablecloths" – the rituals of religion – to the "lay Christian," who is "God's living temple" (843). With an upright and pure heart, and with contemplation and discipline, the Christian becomes the temple of God; Milton locates this temple in the mind, where right reason resides.

Contemplation denotes, as well as necessitates, time and place. Two etymological sources of *contemplation* illustrate the connection between the mind and the place of careful, moral deliberation. The Latin *tempus* not only means "of time, a space, period, and moment," but the term also signifies a "division, section of the temples of the head" (*Cassell's Latin Dictionary*). Another source for *contemplation* is *templum*, "a section, a space marked out by the augur for auspices; consecrated ground, especially a sanctuary, asylum, a place dedicated to a deity, a shrine, temple" (*Cassell's Latin Dictionary*). In seventeenth-century language, *contemplation* combines these elements of a sacred place, found in the mind, for moments of observation and deep consideration. *Contemple*, obsolete after the seventeenth century, adds the prefix, *con-*, "with, together, deeply" (*OED*). *Contemplation* suggests a higher consideration than temporal meditation, for "in Christian writing *meditation*, which engages the intellect or discursive faculties is sometimes distinguished from *contemplation* which transcends them" (*OED*). Milton's insistence on contemplation as a requirement for reason, in etymological terms, implies a transcendent, intuitive reasoning or even divine illumination in the temple of the human mind.

Deliberate moral choice depends on the ability to comprehend “the hidden causes of things,” and contemplation occurs in the sacred place of the mind, in the reasoning process that accompanies intuitive and divine insight.

1.2 Reason and Choice

To understand the significance of the path to virtue that eighteenth-century women take from Milton’s ideology, we must understand that part of the virtuous mind that responds to divine illumination, or what Milton calls right reason. Conscience, a gift of God, provides the divine inner light necessary to make the right choices in harmony with God’s will. When Salmasius imputed Milton’s blindness to sin, Milton rebuked him in *The Second Defense of the English People* (1654), in which he insists, “I would rather have mine [blindness]” than intellectual blindness, “deeply implanted in the inmost faculties, [that] obscures the mind, so that you may see nothing whole or real” (589). Milton then extols his own inner light, in which “the light of the divine countenance may shine forth all the more clearly...so that in this darkness, may I be clothed in light” (590). He also calls upon this light in his invocation in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, asking “what in me is dark / Illumine” (22-23). Milton also offers a poignant description of his physical blindness in the invocation of Book III of *Paradise Lost*, wherein he comprehends the enormity of his darkened aspect. As the narrative turns from Satan’s flight through Hell and Chaos to the eternal light of God in Heaven, in what has been called the invocation to light, the narrator celebrates the sun’s revolving rays, but bemoans his own physical darkness: “but thou / Revisit’st not these eyes, that roll in vain / To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn” (22-24). In his eternal darkness, Milton finds no relief from the rays of the sun or in the hope of daylight,

But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the Book of knowledge fair
Presented with a Universal blanc
Of Nature's works to me expunged and rased,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out. (44-49)

Within the lonely recesses of his mind, Milton realizes the wisdom that comes from the contemplation of the natural world is closed to him forever. Even though his senses are darkened, however, the inner light of divine illumination is heightened in Milton's mind:

So much the rather thou Celestial Light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight. (50-55)

The inner light is superior in wisdom and provides an exposition to all that is available to the poet in his mind's eye. He is more able to discern divine illumination and may therefore speak of God's ways rightly and purely.

All moral choice rests on the presence or absence of right reason. Robert Hoopes explains the importance of right, or intuitive, reasoning to Milton:

But if there is one aspect which in his work received more concentrated attention and articulation than in the work of his predecessors (save Spenser), it is right reason regarded as the principal and means of moral control in the daily life of man. (190)

Not only does Milton call for right reason in moral decisions, his whole argument for human sufficiency lies in his recurring theme: “God left free the Will, for what obeys / Reason is free, and Reason he made right” (*Paradise Lost* IX. 351-52). Decades before Adam relates freedom and right reason to Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Milton states his stance on man’s sufficiency in his treatise *Areopagitica* (1644): “Many there be that complain of divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress, foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him reason to choose, for reason is but choosing” (527). Right reason, the result of discipline and contemplation, provides freedom from discursive reason.

For example, in *Of Education* (1644), he prescribes a form of education that delays writing until a student has formed the discipline and knowledge to write of worthy things. He describes the result of this delay as when “years and good general precepts will have furnished them more distinctly with that act of reason which in *Ethics* is called *Proairesis*: that they may with some judgment contemplate upon moral good and evil” (976). Milton insists upon the necessity of virtue and contemplation in decisive acts because *proairesis* is “the choice of one thing before another, considered by Aristotle as characteristic of moral action,” and is also “the practical deliberation or reasoning leading to choice; the power to choose or make a decision”

(*OED*). According to Mary F. Norton, “the praxis for his [Milton’s] Truth-search is *Proairesis*, Aristotle’s term in *Nichomachean Ethics* for intelligent decision making, which functions as an epistemological infrastructure in Milton’s civil tracts” (48). The epistemological power or preternatural insight that Milton refers to as the inner light or divine truth is found in moments of contemplation, as he expresses in *Eikonoklastes* (1650): “For Truth is properly no more than Contemplation” (333). In moments of contemplation, Milton discovers the scattered vestiges of divine Truth.

In *Paradise Lost*, he includes moments of reflection in which *proairesis* is paramount to the actions of his characters. According to J. Martin Evans, “Milton always seems to concentrate on the ‘decisive moment,’ the narrative juncture at which the climatic sequence of events is just about to happen,” and Evans further asserts that “the Miltonic moment is always pivotal, a moment of crisis that takes place immediately before the plot undergoes a dramatic change of course” (1-2). In the preface to the second edition of *Surprised by Sin*, Stanley Fish asks,

If it is Milton’s conviction that the world is everywhere informed by the same sustaining spirit and everywhere displays the same constant truth, why are so many moments in the poem marked by a radical openness, and why at almost every juncture are important interpretive choices at once demanded and rendered radically indeterminate? (xliii)

These Miltonic moments furnish the reader with the *liberum arbitrium*,³ the decisive instant in which his characters express their ethical *proairesis*. Raphael admonishes Adam at the end of Book VIII in *Paradise Lost*:

³ Thomas Williams, in his introduction to St. Augustine’s *On Free Choice of the Will*, states that right reason is that “feature of the will Augustine calls *liberum arbitrium*, which can be translated as “freedom of decision” or (more usually) “free choice” (xii).

Stand fast; to stand or fall

Free in thine own arbitrament it lies.

Perfect within, no outward aid require;

And all temptation to transgress repel. (640-43)

Fish's answer to his question points to Milton's "doctrine of the inner light" (xliv) and concludes with what he calls the "politics of being, the politics in which the moment of choice does not calculate the odds of success or failure, but looks only to a master imperative that has been written on the fleshly tablets of the heart" (lv). These "tablets of the heart" may also be termed the temple of the heart, in which Milton finds right reason, an intuitive reason given as a gift by God himself. The opposite of intuitive reason, according to the *OED*, is discursive reasoning, "Of or characterized by reasoned argument or thought; logical, ratiocinative" (A.1). Raphael explains that humankind and angels differ in sense to animals in that their intellect gives "both life and sense, / Fancy and understanding, whence the soul / Reason receives, and reason is her being" (V.485-87) He then teaches Adam that reason is either

Discursive, or intuitive discourse

Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours,

Differing but in degree, of kind the same. (V.488-90)

Discursive reason is superior by its reliance on sense and human logic alone. Raphael promises that Adam may "at last turn to spirit" if he is "be found obedient, and retain / Unalterably firm his love entire" (V.501-502). Adam answers that "in contemplation of created things / By steps we may ascend to God" (V.511-12). The higher form of discourse is intuitive, a superior reasoning that includes insight from heaven. The loss of intuition produces confusion and

darkness. Later, Elizabeth Carter will discuss the return to divine reasoning through contemplation of God's creation.

When Milton's characters abandon divine truth in moments of contemplation, they experience *amazement*, the wandering path to spiritual darkness and the opposite of right reason. To be *amazed* is to be "driven stupid; stunned or stupefied, as by a blow; out of one's wits; bewildered, confounded, confused, perplexed; lost in wonder or astonishment" (*OED*); to be *astonished* is to be "stunned or paralyzed mentally, bereft of one's wits; stupefied, bewildered" (*OED*). In 1662, five years before the publication of *Paradise Lost*, Thomas Manton, in his *Practical Commentary on the Epistle of St. Jude*, used the word *maze* to describe the manner in which Satan befuddles the saints: "This is the Devil's device, first to maze the people (as birds are with a bell in the night) and then to drive them into the net" (439). Manton further exhorts his audience that "when Reason should not be in dominion, we suffer lust to take throne...the Will according to right reason and conscience moveth the affections" (424). The concept of amazement as an absence of right reason and conscience was prevalent when Milton was writing his epic. In this maze of confusion, Milton's characters lose the ability to discern divine truth, what Dante calls the loss of the "good of the intellect" in the third canto of his *Inferno*. As Kathleen M. Swain points out: "*Maze* provides a very skillfully manipulated physical, spatial, verbal, etymological, intellectual, and spiritual pattern in which Milton embodies the internal and external actions of the Fall, evil, and reason" (129). The internal spiral of amazement accompanies each passage in which Milton's characters fall, thereby signaling the mental and physical consequences of disobedience; the abandonment of divine truth results in mental confusion and physical degeneration. In significant moments of decision in *Paradise Lost* in which characters choose to abandon right reason through disobedience, Milton inserts the words

amazement or *astonishment*, signifying their descent into discursive reasoning. In *Paradise Lost* moments of contemplation provide an impetus for right reasoning, inasmuch as Milton halts the action to allow for reflection before a Miltonic moment, a momentous moral choice upon which the subsequent narrative turns. As characters in the epic face decisions that will ultimately alter the course of not only the narrative, but for Milton, the theological course of human history, the poet inserts instances of contemplation and uses specific words, strategically placed in the narrative or even placed syntactically on the poetic line, to emphasize the significance of these moments.

When Sin recounts her creation at the heavenly assembly in Book II, she describes Satan's moment of decision, the contemplation and reasoning expressed in the moment of his initial act of disobedience, which creates part of a template for Adam and Eve's later trials. Sin says to Satan that she, "a goddess armed / Out of thy head I sprung: amazement seized / All th' host of Heav'n" (757-59). In this passage *amazement* signifies the fact that Sin wins over a portion of the host, specifically Satan, who "Becam'st enamored" (765). When Satan, in a state of amazement, embraces the idea of Sin, he also embraces his disobedience and begins the descent into discursive reasoning, as evidenced by his absurd proclamations at the beginning of Book I. Satan's posture affirms his utter defeat as he lies prostrate, "in adamantine chains and penal fire" (48), yet he tells Beelzebub, "All is not lost; the unconquerable will, / And study of revenge, immortal hate, / And courage never to submit or yield" (105-8). Satan's will is indeed conquered, and his thoughts tend toward revenge and hate, not victory.

In Satan's proclamations, Milton also focuses attention to the fact that the mind can create circumstance. In Satan's prediction in Book I, he boastfully commands Hell to

Receive thou new possessor: one who brings

A mind not to be changed by place or time.
 The mind is its own place, and in itself
 Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. (252-55)

This passage foreshadows Satan's later realization that he has brought Hell with him to Paradise. Satan determines that the mind has the power to create its own place, whether it bends toward the hell of amazement and despair or towards an internal paradise of peace. Within a few lines, Satan delivers his famous declaration: "Here we may reign secure, and in my choice / To reign is worth ambition though in Hell: / Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n" (261-63). Satan is yet unaware of the profound change his mind has undergone because of proairesis, his own free choice to abandon right reason and disobey God. Without the divine spark within his mind, he is entangled in amazement.

Satan realizes his folly once he is away from his admiring followers. In Book IV, as Satan flies toward Eden,

horror and doubt distract
 His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir
 The Hell within him, for within him Hell
 He brings. (18-20)

His boastful demeanor turns to painful reflection as "now conscience wakes despair / That slumbered, wakes the bitter memory / Of what he was, what is, and what must be / Worse" (23-26). Satan admits, now that he is alone and far from the angels he enticed to war, that God, "deserved no such return / From me...nor was his service hard" (42-43, 45). Satan experiences a moment of truth once he escapes the landscape of hell. He cries,

Me miserable! Which way shall I fly

Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
 Which was I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
 And in the lowest deep a lower deep
 Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
 To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n. (73-78)

Satan's prophecy comes to pass as he experiences the hell within his mind while standing within sight of Eden. Even though Satan still maintains a conscience that affords him a clarifying moment, his abandonment of right reason clouds his perception and creates a deep abyss in his mind. He redoubles his vengeful quest; because all good is lost to him, he decides, "Evil be thou my good" (110). With his new resolution, "each passion dimmed his face / Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy, and despair" (114). The narrator then explains that "Heav'nly minds from such distempers foul / Are ever clear" (118-19). Without the divine illumination of the mind that he once enjoyed, Satan grasps his own revenge as his only remedy.

In his anguish, Satan resembles other Early modern characters who also experience mental torment after their immoral choices. For example, in Christopher Marlowe's sixteenth-century play *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus*, Faustus learns from his conjured demon the truth about the hell of the mind. Faust asks Mephistopheles, "How comes it then that thou are out of hell?" (4.75). Mephistopheles answers,

Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.
 Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God,
 And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
 Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
 In being deprived of everlasting bliss? (4.76-80)

Like Satan, Mephistopheles mourns the loss of his proximity to the divine light of God. In the next scene, he again describes the hell within to Faustus, “for where we are is hell / And where hell is, there must we ever be” (5.121-22). Similar to Milton’s Satan, Mephistopheles carries the hell of his separation from divine light wherever he goes. Satan shares the mental torment that results in moments of doubt and amazement that foreshadow the anguish that Adam and Eve will face when they too disobey God.

For the eighteenth-century female reader, Marlowe and Milton both describe characters that experience the hell of separation from God. Faustus never regains his reason, but Milton sets out a path of virtue that allows for ascension to the divine illumination that pierces the darkness of mental torment. For those who adopt Milton’s prescription for happiness resulting from the divine light within, the path to virtue becomes the freedom they need to transcend their limited place in society.

1.3 Milton’s Eve and Reason

Satan experiences yet another moment of doubt when he spies Adam and Eve in the garden, where, ironically, Milton gives us the first description of the innocent couple through the eyes of their tempter. Satan describes the untainted couple as

Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
 Godlike erect, with native honor clad
 In naked majesty seemed lords of all,
 And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine
 The image of their glorious Maker shone,
 Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure,
 Severe but in true filial freedom placed;

Whence true authority in men; though both
 Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
 For contemplation he and valor formed,
 For softness she and sweet attractive grace,
 He for God only, she for God in him. (288-99)

The long passage must be read in its entirety to fully comprehend its significance. Many scholars hover on a few phrases, such as “not equal, as their sex not equal seemed” and “she for God in him” as Milton’s view of women. The view belongs to the adversary, however, who may not be a reliable witness, and merely relates what “seems” to be the difference in the man and woman. Furthermore, the rest of the descriptors include plural pronouns: they (both the man and the woman) are noble and God-like, clothed in honor; both the man and the woman shine with the image of “their glorious Maker”; both exhibit truth and wisdom, set apart severely, or sanctified, and pure; and, most importantly, both are placed in “filial freedom.” The godlike attributes accorded to Eve, as well as her husband, are mentioned in Genesis, wherein the narrator says, “Thus God created the man in his image: in the image of God created he him: he created them male and female” (1:27), and these are the attributes Satan seeks to destroy. Mary Astell, Lady Mary Chudleigh, and Elizabeth Carter all reclaim the nobility of the created state of humanity, including women. Because of his fallen state, Satan feels the tremendous gulf that separates him from Adam and Eve in all of their glory. He admits that he could love them under different circumstances because “so lively shines / In them divine resemblance, and such grace / The hand that formed them on their shape hath poured” (363-65). Again, the “divine resemblance” pertains to both of them. In other words, when Satan offers Eve a more godlike

state, he is offering her what she already possesses as a daughter of God, bearing a divine image and nobility.

Despite their mutual dignity as human beings, Milton differentiates between Adam's and Eve's education and sources of knowledge; much like other women of the Early modern period and eighteenth century, Eve's education comes at second hand and through her husband's authority. Eve's first words acknowledge her place in the chain of being:

To whom this Eve with perfect beauty adorned.
 "My author and disposer; what thou bidd'st
 Unargued I obey; so God ordains,
 God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more
 Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise. (IV. 634-38)

Eve claims that her happiness comes from her "unargued" obedience to God through her obedience to her husband, a common sentiment in marriage for the time in which Milton writes the epic. Adam is Eve's source of knowledge of God's will, and Milton makes no mention of Eve's inner reason at this point in the narrative. In fact, Eve's communication with her Creator is with and through her husband; for their matins, Adam and Eve stand together: "Thus at their shady lodge arrived, both stood, / Both turned, and under open sky adored / The God that made both sky, air, Earth and heav'n" (IV. 720-22). The uniformity of their posture and prayer allows no individuality on Eve's part in her prayer; in fact, their prayers are "said unanimous" (IV. 736). Adam serves as a mediator between Eve and heavenly beings.

The way in which Eve receives information reflects a traditional view of marriage and education for women in the early modern and eighteenth-century periods. Raphael answers Adam's many questions concerning the nature of God, the angels, Satan's rebellion, the war in

heaven, and the possibility that one day Adam and his wife may attain a higher spiritual state.

Adam thanks Raphael, his “divine / Historian, who thus largely hast allayed / The thirst I had of knowledge” (VIII. 6-8). When Eve leaves her place as audience to their discourse, she does not leave “as not with such discourse / Delighted, or not capable her ear / Of what was high” (VIII.48-50); she simply prefers “such pleasure...Adam relating, she sole auditress; / Her husband the relater she preferred / Before the angel” (VIII. 50-53). What breaks from tradition is that Milton allows Eve delight at the discourse of Raphael and Adam, and her reason is capable of “what was high.” When Adam admits that Eve’s beauty renders him irrational, and “All higher knowledge in her presence falls / Degraded” (VIII. 552-53), Raphael admonishes him,

What higher in her society thou find’st
 Attractive, human, rational, love still;
 In loving thou dost well, in passion not,
 Wherein true love consists not; love refines
 The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat
 In reason, and is judicious, is the scale
 By which Heav’nly love thou may’st ascend,
 Not sunk in carnal pleasure, for which cause
 Among the beasts no mate for thee was found. (VIII. 586-94)

Raphael elevates Eve’s role to one of a rational human being, a fit companion for Adam because of her ability to reason and return his love. He reiterates that true love may also elevate them both to a higher state of being and warns Adam not to see Eve as simply an object of carnal pleasure.

Raphael's admonition also echoes Milton's view of marriage in his treatise *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643). Milton writes of God's first intention of marriage, "in words expressly implying the apt and cheerful conversation of man with woman, to comfort and refresh him against the evil of solitary life" (866) as the answer to God's declaration in Genesis, "It is not good that the man should be himself alone: I will make him an help meet for him." (2:18). According to Stephen B. Dobranski, "writing at a time when divorce was permitted only in cases of adultery, he took the radical position of emphasizing spiritual companionship" ("Milton's Social Life" 11-12). Milton finds in woman a spiritual and intellectual companion, for "in God's intention a meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and noblest end of marriage, for we find here no expression so necessarily implying carnal knowledge as this prevention of loneliness to the mind and spirit of man" (871). Milton's representation of Eve stems from the theology of radical Protestantism. He refuses, as Stevie Davies suggests, to

View her as a species of property, a sexual vehicle or a means of propagation, but insist[s] on her dignity as the unique source of a divine and incomparable joy in the union of mind with mind, soul with soul. Milton does not believe, and never says, that man and woman are equal, but in his high valuing of marriage as a potentially paradisaical estate, he manages to convey a sense that they are somehow more than equal. (182)

For Milton, union with an unfit intellectual companion is a fate worse than death. A disastrous marriage bereft of intellectual conversation constitutes a state of being worse than the loneliness of singlehood. He asserts,

The fit union of their souls be such as may even incorporate them to love and amity; but that can never be where no correspondence is of the mind; nay instead

of being one flesh, they will be rather two carcasses chained unnaturally together; or as it may happen, a living soul bound to a dead corpse, a punishment too like that inflicted by the tyrant Mezentius⁴; so little worthy to be received as that remedy of loneliness which God meant us. (903)

Adam's wife is more than "sweet, attractive grace"; she provides him with a suitable companion who allies his loneliness and sharpens his intellect. Eighteenth-century women writers will later address the suitability of an educated wife as a motive for the education of women in many of their works. Eve becomes a model for women such as Astell, Chudleigh, and Carter, who all stress the importance of education to the intellectual union of men and women.

Satan's devises a plan to *maze* the reason of the happy couple. He says, "Hence I will excite their minds / With more desire to know" (IV. 522-23), a knowledge that, according to the tempter, was "invented with design / to keep them low whom knowledge might exalt" (IV. 524-25). Ironically, this same character has just peered with envy on the couple whom God has already exalted with his own "divine resemblance." Satan's plan includes a visit to Eve in her dreams to excite her mind. He endeavors to penetrate "the organs of her fancy, and with them forge / Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams" (IV. 801-3), and with malicious enticement rouse "At least distempered, discontented thoughts, / Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires / Blown up with high conceits engendr'ing pride" (IV. 801-3, 807-9). Satan's use of "fancy" would have alerted seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers to the dangers of the tempter

⁴ In Virgil's *Aenied*, Mezentius, the Etruscan king, "He even tied corpses to living bodies, as a means / of torture, placing hand on hand and face against face, / so killing by a lingering death, in that wretched / embrace, that ooze of disease and decomposition" (8.485-88).

creating a delusion in her mind. Robert A. Erickson explains the importance of Satan's violation of Eve's fancy:

To understand more fully the importance of Milton's Eve to the writers of early modern fiction, we must pause to consider her relationship to '*Fancy*' or *Phantasia*, one of the three major components of the mind (the other two were *Ratio* or reason and *Memoria* or memory) in the paradigm of faculty psychology that prevailed in the West from the Middle Ages into the eighteenth century...Satan's violation of Eve through his refashioning of her dream and his attempt to engender something new in her mind – the primary sin of 'pride' – might also be seen as the prototype of numerous subsequent representations of a dangerous imaginative object, a book or a painting, impressing itself on the all too receptive female mind or heart in Restoration and eighteenth-century fiction.
(121-22)

The delusion Satan hopes to engender is, of course, that Eve is not content with her status as second to Adam, and therefore third to God. Furthermore, he wishes to spur "inordinate desires" in her mind, rendering her reason chaotic and disordered. The scene would have been perceived in Milton's audience as an attempt to overthrow an inferior, feminine mind that is easily swayed with imaginative representations of desire. In her dream, Satan invites her,

Taste this, and be henceforth among the gods
Thyself a goddess, not to Earth confined,
But sometimes in the air, as we, sometimes
Ascend to Heav'n, by merit thine, and see
What life the gods live there, and such live. (V. 77-81).

Eve awakes to a disturbed condition, “of offense and trouble, which my mind / Knew never till this irksome night” (V. 34-35). Satan speaks as though Eve’s life is not a paradise, that Earth confines her to a status beneath who she truly is. He plants the seeds of pride – the notion that her noble being made in the image of God is somehow inferior to being a goddess. When she details her vision to her husband, Adam assures her that her dream holds no power over her mind if she does not embrace the evil; “in the soul / are many lesser faculties that serve / Reason as chief; among these Fancy next / her office holds” (V. 100-103). Moreover, Adam insists that “Evil into the mind of god or man / May come or go, so unapproved, and leave / No spot or blame behind” (V. 117-19). In spite of the fancy that arises when reason “retires / Into her private cell when nature rests,” and “Fancy wakes to imitate her,” the divine light that resides in Eve’s “cell” has the power to expose the evil and leave the idea unapproved, or not chosen, through the action of proairesis. Through his reassurance, Adam reinforces the notion that the existence of right reason makes it possible for Eve to choose, thereby admitting that she possesses right reason even though she is a woman. In this passage, Milton echoes his thesis of *Areopagitica*, in which he paraphrases St. Paul’s statement: “To the pure all things are pure...all kind of knowledge whether of good or evil; the knowledge cannot defile...if the will and the conscience be not defiled” (937). Additionally, Milton states, “For those actions which enter into a man, rather than issue out of him and therefore defile not, God uses not to captivate under a perpetual childhood of prescription but trusts him with the gift of reason to be his own chooser” (938). In underscoring Eve’s sufficiency to stand, Milton reminds us of another, earlier female character who resists temptation through proairesis.

Milton had portrayed an earlier vision of a woman who was capable of the inner light of reason in *A Masque at Ludlow Castle* (1634). In the Elder Brother’s speech, he places

“Wisdom’s self” in “sweet retired solitude / Where with her best nurse Contemplation / She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings” (375-78). The image of contemplation as a bird pluming her feathers and growing her wings embodies the preparatory experience wisdom seeks in tranquility to elevate the mind about the “bustle of resort” (379), as the inner light guides and protects the flight of virtue from external uncertainty. The Elder Brother reassuringly describes the impervious heart of the Lady, who possesses “the unpolluted temple of the mind” (461), and who may be “surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled” (590). Later, the Lady confidently informs Comus that he “canst not touch the freedom of my mind / Will all thy charms, although this corporeal rind / Thou has immanacled, while Heav’n sees good” (663-65). According to Cedric Brown, “many themes articulated at Ludlow were also preoccupations of Milton’s other, mainly later, writing, particularly as they concern patterns of education and models of governance in the reformed Protestant state” (28). The Lady represents the freedom that a virtuous mind, prepared by contemplation, enjoys in the face of temptation, so that in the moment of decision, she is able to resist her tempter’s charms. Unfortunately, Comus is not as rhetorically adept as Milton’s Satan.

Satan is the great rhetorician of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. He begins his plot for revenge from his initial encounter with the first couple. From his position as a voyeur in Book IV, Satan overhears the words of Adam’s reassuring speech to Eve and learns of the one prohibition to humankind. He muses, “All is not theirs it seems” (516). He sets up his rhetorical strategy and asks the questions Eve will later ask of Adam and ask of herself during the temptation scene. If we remember at this point of the narrative Milton’s promise to “justify the ways of God to men,” the interrogatories and responses between Adam and Eve, and then Satan and Eve reveal Milton’s justification. First, Satan sets up the paradigm with which he will later engage Eve. He

wonders why is “knowledge forbidden?” (IV.515), and then asks himself, “Why should their Lord / Envy them that?” (IV.516-17). His plan depends upon disturbing the divine image Adam and Eve possess, and he seeks them out to engage them in a rhetoric argument that will disturb their right reason. Satan is delighted when he spies Eve alone and apart from her husband, a condition abhorrent to an audience at a time when women were never allowed to venture forth on their own for fear of their inability to resist seduction.

The fact that Milton separates the couple is troublesome for many reasons. First, Milton, who is an expert in biblical proof text for all of his arguments, departs from the scriptural account of Genesis in the separation scene. Genesis 3 of the 1560 Geneva Bible⁵ reads,

1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made: and he said to the woman, Yea, hath God indeed said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden.
 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.
 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, Ye shall not die at all,
 5 But God doth know that when ye shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.
 6 So the woman (seeing that the tree was good for meat, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired, to get knowledge) took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with⁶ her, and he did eat.

Indeed, many translations of the Eden story place Eve’s husband *with her* or at her side during the temptation of the serpent. Yet, Milton decides to ignore the proximity in Genesis and stage an

⁵ The 1560 Geneva Bible, or English Bible, was printed in Switzerland during the reign of Queen Mary and is considered the text most read by Milton as it was the English translation widely used during the Reformation period in England. Of course, as a master of languages, Milton was capable of his own translations of scripture. The Geneva Bible was also the version brought to the New World aboard the Mayflower.

⁶ According to Strong’s Concordance, “אִתּוֹ, `im {eem}: adv. or prep., *with* (i.e. in *conjunction* with), in varied applications; spec. *equally with*; unto, by, as long, neither, from between, from among, to, unto” (#5973, p. 213).

elaborate separation scene in order to place a solitary Eve in the path of the tempter. Milton's extensive knowledge of Hebrew that he gained at Cambridge would have included rabbinical writings about the Torah, so Milton was fully aware of the ancient version of the text. According to Dan Vogel, Milton composes the separation scene from ancient commentaries on the Hebrew account in Genesis, and "along the way conveys a surprising characterization of Mother Eve" (19). In addition to the Geneva Bible, "Milton had at hand the Buxtorf Bible⁷, a Calvinist publication, which was not a translation, but the Masoretic Text of the Tanakh printed on the page in a central column flanked by Rashi's commentary on the spine side and that of Ibn Ezra on the page edge" (20). Buxtorf also included commentaries from other rabbis on the subject of Genesis 3, and Vogel suggests that Milton's departure from scripture, came from the midrash, or commentary, of the Genesis passage offered by Rabbi David Kimhi: "Afterwards, she gave [the fruit] to her husband, who was at one of the [other] places in the Garden, and brought to him from the fruit and informed him of the words of the serpent, and they [Eve and Adam] ate together" (20). After the Middle Ages, many translators leave out the phrase "with her" in the Genesis account.⁸

⁷ Johannes Buxtorf the Elder (1564-1629) wrote the *Manuale Hebraicum et Chaldaicum* (1602; 7th ed., 1658), a lexicon of the Hebrew Torah; "Rashi" is the acronym for Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (Shlomo Yitzhaki), 1040-1105, a French Hebraic scholar who wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Torah; Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089-1167) was a distinguished Hebraic commentator; and David Kimhi (1160-1237) was a medieval Hebraic grammarian and philosopher who commented extensively on the Hebrew texts.

⁸ For a comprehensive study of translations and commentaries, see Julie Faith Parker's recent article, "Blaming Eve Alone: Translation, Omission, and Implications of *וּמִהָרָמַע* in Genesis 3:6b," wherein the author catalogues fifty English translations of Genesis and analyzes "the biblical text, Hebrew grammars, commentaries, ancient sources, and translation committee notes to explore the history, implications, and motivations of translators' decisions regarding the phrase *with her*" (729).

For example, Jerome was the first writer to dismiss the phrase in his translation of the Vulgate, the most influential Latin translation of the scriptures leading up to the Reformation. In fact, as Julie Faith Parker points out, Jerome's omission was "was intentional, since both [his] source texts contain this information" (737). Parker quotes Jane Barr, a Vulgate scholar, who posits, "Whenever Jerome approached a passage where women were involved his usual objectivity deserted him, and his translation became less precise, and not infrequently, biased" (269). Furthermore, English reformers such as John Calvin championed St. Jerome's position. Parker includes a passage from Calvin's 1554 *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*:

And gave also unto her husband with her. From these words, some conjecture that Adam was present when his wife was tempted and persuaded by the serpent, which is by no means credible. Yet it might be that he soon joined her, and that, even before the woman tasted the fruit of the tree, she related the conversation held with the serpent, and entangled him with the same fallacies by which she herself had been deceived. (151-52)

These scholars offer a detailed and persuasive account of Milton's source of the passage, and Milton was certainly aware of the translations and commentaries, but his knowledge of these opinions does not explain why Milton chooses to use the separation in his narrative. Not one to usually bend to convention or tradition, Milton had more in mind than perpetuating a narrative of woman as seducer and deceiver.

Milton chooses a battle of wits, or a rhetorical battle of reason, between a celestial being and a woman. In the argument between Adam and Eve in Book IX that culminates in her separation from her husband, Eve poses those questions that define Milton's justification of

God's ways. Joan S. Bennett agrees that "this interlude is too fully developed to be merely a device for getting Adam offstage, that something central to Milton's vision of the Fall is here dramatized," and that at the heart of the separation scene "the matter most fundamentally at stake is the meaning of human liberty" (388). Adam begins by asserting the traditional stance on a woman's place beside her husband, "The Wife, where danger or dishonor lurks, / Safest and seemliest by her husband stays, / Who guards her, or with her the worst endures" (267-69). Eve's answer suggests a proto-feminist response: "But that thou shouldst my firmness therefore doubt / To God or thee, because we have a foe / May tempt it, I expected not to hear (279-81) and further accuses Adam of distrust of her faith and her ability to withstand Satan's duplicity: "His fraud is then thy fear, which plain infers / Thy equal fear that my firm faith and love / Can by his fraud be shaken or seduced" (285-87). Adam's reassurance that he only wishes to guard her from an attack, "which on us both at once / The enemy, though bold, will hardly dare" (303-4) does not satisfy Eve's sense of lost liberty. She repeats those questions that Milton treats in all of his writing concerning free will:

If this be our condition, thus to dwell
 In narrow circuit straitened by a foe,
 Subtle or violent, we not endued
 Single with like defense, wherever met,
 How are we happy, still in fear of harm? (322-26)

Eve determines in her own mind that her own faith and reason are sufficient to repel temptation to betray God and her husband. Moreover, Milton allows Eve the same argument for liberty that he puts forth in *Areopagitica*, that an untried virtue is not a true virtue: Eve insists, "And what is faith, love, virtue unassayed / Alone, without exterior help sustained?" (335-36). Eve's words

echo the admonition of Raphael to Adam at the end of Book VIII, that human reason is sufficient, “Perfect within, no outward aid require” (641). Diane Kelsey McColley suggests that Eve’s determination to test her reason demonstrates “the dignity of individual responsibility” upon which “Milton’s drama of disobedience and restoration depends” (103-4). In Eve’s insistence that she may unaided resist temptation rests the dignity of the free human will. What Eve does not consider, however, because she has no knowledge of hypocrisy, is the power of amazement.

Satan mazes Eve in Book IX of *Paradise Lost*. Beginning with his posture and weaving approach, he creates an environment of doubt and confusion. Disguised as the serpent, he

toward Eve

Addressed his way, not with indented wave,
Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
Circular base of rising folds, that tow’red
Fold above fold a surging maze. (495-99)

Satan’s approach sets up the powerful amazement his temptation wreaks on Eve’s reason. Ignoring his flattery, Eve responds only to the serpent’s ability to speak, “at the voice much marveling; at length / Not unamazed” (551-52). She is “yet more amazed” (614) at Satan’s description of a wisdom-giving plant, and follows his lead as “He leading swiftly rolled / in tangles, and made intricate seem straight, / To mischief swift” (631-33), much, as the narrator presents in simile, like when “evil spirit attends / Hovering and blazing with delusive light, / Misleads th’ amazed night-wanderer from his way” (638-40). Once they reach the forbidden tree, however, Eve acknowledges both her knowledge of God’s command, her free will, and her sufficiency to stand: she reveals her sufficiency to comprehend the sole command to the serpent,

But of this Tree we may not taste nor touch;
 God so commanded, and left that command
 Sole daughter of his voice; the rest, we live
 Law to ourselves, our reason is our law. (651-54)

Eve's reason is the only law and discipline she needs to obey the sole command of God. She experiences freedom of the will because in all other matters, she decides for herself according to "yet sinless" desires (659). Satan turns all of his rhetorical skill against Eve's reason in rapid interrogatories that do not allow her time for contemplation or reflection of his words. Consequently, Satan's implication of the unjustness of God, "God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just; / Not just, not God: not feared then, nor obeyed" (700-701) and his offer of increased knowledge, "replete with guile / Into her heart too easy entrance won" (733-34). Milton gives Eve the theological question upon which the entire epic rests, "But if death / Bind us with afterbands, what profits then / Our inward freedom?" (760-62). Eve forgets that her "inner freedom" consists of her right reason, which wholly depends on her obedience to divine authority. Because she is amazed, she trades her "inward freedom" and right reason for the lies of Satan, which "impregn'd / With reason, to her seeming, and with truth" (737-38). Satan does not use a direct attack on Eve's faith; he compromises Eve's reason because she is innocent of any guile. Therefore, when Milton later states that God "Hindered not Satan to attempt the mind / Of man, with strength entire, and free will armed," he is referring to Satan's temptation of Eve, a woman. Adam's falls "fondly overcome with female charm" (999), with no devil in sight.

Consequently, however, the loss for both man and woman is the same: the loss of right reason and the acquisition of perpetual confusion in spiritual darkness. They

Soon found their eyes how opened, and their minds

How darkened; innocence, that as a veil
 Shadowed them from knowing ill, was gone,
 Just confidence, and native righteousness
 And honor from about them, naked left
 To guilty shame. (IX. 1053-58)

Adam and Eve lose “just confidence and native righteousness” because of their free choice; therefore, from the fall until the advent of the Christ, humankind must live under outward law instead of their own reason as their law. For Eve, moreover, the consequence of her loss of freedom as a woman is grave. Adam now sees his wife through the prism of sin: “Carnal desire inflaming; he on Eve / Began to cast lascivious eyes” (1013-14). Gone are the sentiments of a suitable, rational partner who can allay his loneliness; he only sees her physical attraction as a means to satisfy his physical desires. Adam exclaims,

For never did thy beauty since the day
 I saw thee first and wedded thee, adorned
 With all perfections, so inflame my sense
 With ardor to enjoy thee, fairer now
 Than ever, bounty of this virtuous Tree. (1029-33)

With one taste of forbidden fruit, the relationship between Adam and Eve changes to a definition of marriage more familiar to the eighteenth-century mind, and woman’s virtue becomes merely an outward manifestation of her sexual being.

For both Adam and Eve, their divine light becomes darkened: they already had knowledge of what was good and best; now they only gain the knowledge that Satan possesses – the knowledge of evil. The narrator explains,

High winds worse within
 Began to rise, high passions, anger, hate,
 Mistrust, suspicion, discord, and shook sore
 Their inward state of mind, calm region once
 And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent:
 For understanding ruled not, and the will
 Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
 To sensual appetite, who from beneath
 Usurping over sov'reign reason claimed
 Superior sway. (1122-31)

The first couple loses free will to “sensual appetite” and proairesis to confusion. They cannot hear the voice of God in the turbulence of their passions. Even though God promises to place “within them as a guide / My Umpire Conscience” (*PL* III.194-95), whom they may use to arrive safely home after their temporal struggle, their right reason is darkened until Christ redeems it when he mazes Satan in the desert of temptation that Milton locates in his subsequent epic, *Paradise Regained*. All humanity, including women, finds their redemption in the Messiah.

1.4 Redeeming Virtue

Before the couple is forced to leave Paradise, however, Milton places in the character of Eve the seeds of redemption. Opposing the vicious and vengeful dream Satan visits on the mind of Eve before her fall, God gives her a dream vision of her place in the restoration of humankind and the paradise within. God’s kindness to Eve shines with “propitious, some great good” prophecy as she sleeps, wearied “with sorrow and heart’s distress” (XII. 612-113). More importantly, as Joshua Held points out, Eve “receives this guidance in the inner recesses of her

mind (in a dream)" (187), where divine light reaches beyond the darkness of her grief and regret.

As she leaves Eden, she goes with the comfort and

This further consolation yet secure

I carry hence; though all by me is lost,

Such favor I unworthy am vouchsafed,

By me the promised seed shall all restore. (XII. 620-24)

Eve's prophecy bears the final words spoken in Milton's great epic. Her hope contains the seeds of a "peace of conscience, which many contemporaries described as a 'paradise within'" (Held 172). After her dream vision, the calming effect of her words "reflects the consolatory nature of her own divinely inspired interpretation of the inner paradise" (Held 173). Milton places the burden of the battle of reason on his female character, who falls and rebounds, and who "moves beyond her role as protagonist in the tragedy of the Fall, to embrace her divinely appointed, central role in the epic of Redemption" (Lewalski 277). Eve's redemption, as does that of the eighteenth-century women who follow her example, lies in the work of the Messiah.

Instead of narrating Christ's act of redemption on the cross in his epic sequel, Milton chooses Christ's temptation in the desert for a *Paradise Regained*. J. Martin Evans asserts that Milton's "decision to make Christ's temptation the subject of the poem is to be found...in [his] distinctive doctrine of the redemption" (119). Evans further posits that Milton, in line with other early modern writers, "believed that the principal function of literature was to offer the reader exemplary patterns of virtuous behavior upon which his or her own conduct could be modeled," and that Milton selects "as the subject of *Paradise Regained* the one episode in the history of our salvation that a devout reader could reasonably aspire to imitate: Christ's obedience to the Law of God in the wilderness" (121). Milton includes a brief description of the physical sacrifice of

the Son on the cross in Book XII of *Paradise Lost*, wherein Michael explains to Adam: “But to the cross he nails thy enemies, / The law that is against thee, and the sins / Of all mankind, with him there crucified” (415-17). And even though the young Milton resists writing about the Christ’s passion, stating the “subject the author finding to be above his years he had when he wrote it,” the mature Milton never returns to the subject as a major theme in his work.

Milton understood that his Christian audience was all too familiar with the passion and atonement of Christ, so he designs *Paradise Regained* for the express purpose of demonstrating his favorite theme: in each temptation that Jesus resists, he defeats Satan in the debate and restores divine truth, if only for a season, to a humanity held captive in the chaos of spiritual darkness. As important as the atonement of the Son is to Milton’s theology, the reinstatement of divine truth as the inner light and the reparation of right reason is Milton’s paramount concern in *Paradise Regained*. In his second epic, God reveals that, just as he had promised Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Satan will encounter in the Son a new human being fit to the purpose of restoring right reason: the adversary,

Now shall know I can produce a man
Of female seed, far abler to resist
All his solicitations, and at length
All his vast force, and drive him back to Hell,
Winning by conquest what the first man lost
By fallacy surprised. (I.150-55)

This man, this messiah, is the promised seed of Eve. For, even though she fails to obey the sole command in *Paradise Lost*, she is the origin of redemption in *Paradise Regained*. Jesus begins his journey, then, in the wandering maze of the wilderness, fearlessly confronting Satan’s

deceptions and temptations armed with the Spirit of Truth. The mature Christ in *Paradise*

Regained declares:

God hath now sent his living oracle
 Into the world, to teach his final will,
 And sends his Spirit of Truth henceforth to dwell
 In pious hearts, an inward oracle
 To all truth requisite for men to know. (I.455-64)

The appearance of the Messiah signifies a new covenant in which the spirit of God may indwell with human beings and vanquish the deceptions of Satan, expelling spiritual darkness and instilling divine truth.

Milton's use of contemplation and right reason does not end with *Paradise Lost* but extends into the desert of temptation where Christ *mazes* Satan through a series of revealed truths. When Satan sees the Spirit descend on Jesus, he "is roving still / About the world" (l. 34-35), but he briefly pauses long enough to view God's favor on his son's baptism. The sight mazes, or dismays Satan, and he "A while survey'd / With wonder, then with envy fraught and rage" (l. 37-38). When he relates the dreaded sight to his cohort, his "words impression left / Of much amazement to th' infernal crew / Distracted and surprised with deep dismay" (l. 106-9). The fallen angels are struck "with looks *aghast*" (l.43) or "seized with the visible or physical signs of terror or horror; struck with amazement" (*OED*) by the presence of the promised deliverer. Their spiral of amazement ghastly recompense begins.

Whereas Satan and his followers fly in confusion and dismay, Jesus lives a life of quiet contemplation. Mary describes his life as "Private, unactive, calm, contemplative, / Little suspicious to any King" (II. 81-82). His contemplative and peaceful life is interrupted as Milton

stages another battle of wits, or reason; this time, however, Satan will battle, not the naïve woman in the garden, but the Son of God. After his baptism, Jesus spends some time “musing and much revolving in his breast, / How best the mighty work he might begin” (I. 185-86).

Moreover, he takes his deliberate, contemplative posture into the wilderness:

One day forth walked alone, the Spirit leading;
 And his deep thoughts, the better to converse
 With solitude, till far back from track of men,
 Thought following thought, and step by step led on,
 He entered now the bordering Desert wild,
 And with dark shades and rocks environed round,
 His holy Meditations thus pursued. (I. 189-95)

Jesus’ quiet reflection in the desert stands in sharp contrast to Satan’s restless agitation, and his tranquil contemplation prepares him for the contest of wills with Satan. As he walks, “step by step,” he completely relies on the illumination of the Spirit:

And now by some strong motion I am led
 Into this wilderness, to what intent
 I learn not yet, perhaps I need not know;
 For what concerns my knowledge God reveals. (I. 290-93)

Unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus demonstrates no inordinate desire for knowledge, forbidden or otherwise. He moves by faith, or “strong motion,” an inner leading from the Spirit, or as Roy Flannagan notes in his gloss on this passage, “When it does not mean physical movement, motion is Milton’s word for inward or even instinctive prompting from God” (730). The

contemplative life and the prompting of divine illumination afford Jesus right reason in his verbal battle with Satan.

Jesus accuses Satan of misleading and confusing all of humanity since the Fall. He says, “that hath been thy craft, / By mixing somewhat true to vent more lies...what but dark / Ambiguous and with double sense deluding” (I. 432-35). In the ensuing debates, Milton ends each encounter with Jesus’ proairesis, his obedient response to God in the face of Satan’s guile. And in each instance, Satan responds to Jesus’ right reason with stunned, amazed silence. When Satan offers him wealth and kingdoms, Jesus answers patiently, “yet not for that a crown, / Golden in show is but a wreath of thorns” (II. 458-59). Jesus calmly describes the nature of a true king:

But to guide nations in the way of truth
By saving doctrine, and from error lead,
To know, and knowing worship God aright,
Is yet more kingly; this attracts the soul,
Governs the inner man, the nobler part. (II. 473-77)

Jesus restores the “way of truth” and divine authority in his resistance. When Jesus finishes his description of the necessity of truth and nobility in the “inner man, the nobler part,” Satan stands “A while as mute confounded what to say, / What to reply, confuted and convinced / Of his weak arguing, and fallacious drift” (III. 2-4). When Jesus refuses the offer of glory by zeal and the overthrow of tyranny, Satan “had not to answer, but stood struck / With guilt of his own sin, for he himself / Insatiable of glory, had lost all” (III. 146-48). The rhetorical volleys spent, Satan,

Perplexed and troubled at his bad success
The tempter stood, nor had what to reply,

Discovered in his fraud, thrown from his hope,
 So oft, and the persuasive rhetoric
 That sleeked his tongue, and won so much on Eve,
 So little here, nay lost. (IV. 1-6)

Jesus silences and repulses every test of Satan, and therefore restores the reason that Eve lost in the garden. He renders unto Satan what the devil had dished out in the garden, or as Steven Goldsmith points out, “the Son steadily speaks at greater length and in the process of debate consistently renders Satan mute until the adversary’s final silence is the emblem of nonexistence, spiritual substancelessness” (125). Jesus reclaims right reason and right choosing on the plane of the spirit of truth, rendering Satan the position he so grossly imposed on the first couple in Paradise.

Milton demonstrates the proper stance of obedience in the culmination of *Paradise Regained*. In his third and final temptation in the epic, Satan places Jesus on the highest pinnacle of Herod’s temple and scornfully dares him, “There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright / Will ask thee skill” (IV.551-52). Stand or fall: the choice echoes the choice of all of Milton’s characters in *Paradise Lost*. Carol Barton identifies this scene on the pinnacle as the instant in which “Jesus, the Son of Man begins to become the Christ” and that it is “on the pinnacle ‘unobserv’d’ that the unaided righteousness of the ultimate One Just Man defeats the sophistical contortions of the Prince of Lies” (30-31). The point of the Son’s ability to stand upon the pinnacle is that he completely relies on the aid of his Father. Satan “smitten” and in “amazement” falls at the sight of Jesus standing on the pinnacle, an act that Satan understands restores the true stance of all created beings from God’s description of Adam in Book III of *Paradise Lost*:

He had of me

All he could have; I made him just and right,
 Such I created all th' ethereal Powers
 And spirits, both them who stood and them who failed,
 Sufficient to have stood who stood, and fell who fell.
 Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith or love. (III. 97-104)

The image of Jesus standing on the pinnacle of the temple is the image of the first born of God, created just and right, proving his “true allegiance, constant faith” and “love.” This scene restores the constancy that Eve claims for herself in her argument with Adam. To redeem her seduction by Satan, Jesus once again proves that God’s children have the sufficiency to stand in the face of temptation. And Satan falls. Again. The Messiah’s words, “Tempt not the Lord thy God” (IV.561) reinforce the divinity of the Christ and remind Satan of his inferior position. This truth mazes Satan and sends him falling back to his position of “Ruin, and desperation, and dismay” (IV.579). The remnants of humanity who seek the truth of freedom receive hope from this act, hope that the inner oracle, the Spirit of Truth, can stand against Satan’s deception once again. Because Jesus uses divine truth to vanquish temptation and regain lost Paradise, he sets the foundation of a “fairer Paradise” (IV.613) in which human beings may be armed against the Deceiver with the Spirit of Truth. The Messiah brought the gift of Truth for a season to a world engulfed in darkness and broke the maze of confusion. According to Mary C. Fenton, “by resisting Satan’s temptations, Jesus begins the process of constructing *himself* as an internalized, spiritual means and venue of redemption which will eventually enable humanity to enter into God’s eternal kingdom” (162). The encounters with Satan, however, forever change the life of

the Messiah: "From the point at which the poem concludes, his life will be public, active, mobile, dynamic; he will soon embark upon the revolutionary ministry that will eventually lead him to Calvary" (Evans 118). That "revolutionary ministry" includes women. Jesus' contemplative beginnings give him the strength to choose God's will and fulfill the promise he made in *Paradise Lost*, to make woman the source of redemption. Because of the Messiah's resistance to discursive reasoning, human beings, in moments of silent contemplation, are also capable of abandoning fanciful amazement, drawing on the force of divine illumination and thwarting Satan's attempts to sabotage right reason.

It is this spirit of truth that comes forth through the pages of scripture, and through the lines of Milton's poetry, and captures the imaginations of eighteenth-century women writers who seek to repair and redefine feminine virtue from the ruins of the fall. Women must look to restore their "inward state of mind" and "calm region" to claim the redemption of peace that the Messiah offers through contemplation and obedience. For the Christian,

Now not only had Christ's spirit dwelling within but could cooperate with their minds as well as their wills. The Spirit worked to rectify fallen reason and allow it to sort possibly relevant moral truths into an order genuinely applicable to a particular situation. (Bennett 396)

In other words, women of the eighteenth century, by following the path Milton paves to the redemptive work of the Messiah, could overcome the traditions and laws set down by men and find within themselves the capacity for proairesis to make good and virtuous decisions. They could further enjoy a restored relationship with their God and be led "step by step" by a divine power within. In Milton's work, eighteenth-century writers find an incomparable richness of

deliverance from the definition of virtue imposed upon them by a patriarchy that seeks to view them as mere sensual beings.

On Milton's path to virtue through education, contemplation, and right reason, women find the poet's theology of free will, which is the crux of his "great argument." In moments of proairesis, Milton contrasts Milton contrasts harmony, assurance, adoration, stillness, and love with discord, amazement, dismay, restlessness, and hatred. In every moment of truth, the readers of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* understand what it means to stand obedient or fall, and that "Reason is also a choice" (*PL* III. 108). Armed with the Spirit of Truth, brought to earth by the Messiah, women may learn from the examples of Eve and the Son, choose well for themselves, and create a paradise within.

4 CHAPTER TWO – MARY ASTELL AND THE “HAPPY RETREAT”

Charm'd into love of what obscured my fame,
 If I had wit, I'd celebrate her name,
 And of the beauties of her mind proclaim.

Mary Astell, Preface to *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (1724)

In her proto-feminist work *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, Mary Astell offers the women of the eighteenth century “a *Paradise* as your Mother *Eve* forfeited...Here are no Serpents to deceive you, whilst you entertain your selves in these delicious Gardens” (74). Of course, the reference could apply to the *Eve* of Genesis or to Milton’s *Eve*, but either source suggests a resistance to a traditional view of the fallen *Eve* and the consequential effect on the women who live in her shadow. Born in 1666, one year before Milton published *Paradise Lost*, Astell became a seeker of “the scattered vestiges of truth,” a proponent of women’s education, and an advocate for the redefinition of female virtue.

Like other women of her time, Astell was for the most part self-educated. Jacqueline Broad relates that Astell was “educated by their unmarried uncle Ralph, the curate of St. Nicholas Church in Newcastle, who was also a student of Emmanuel College during the heyday of the Cambridge Platonists” (n. pag.); George Ballard suggests, furthermore, that “she was very genteely educated and taught all the accomplishments which are usually learned by gentlewomen of her station” (306), and that the tutoring made possible by her uncle was limited to “philosophy, mathematicks and logic” (307). In spite of her limited formal studies, as Patricia Springborg notes, she “had access to London intellectual circles and a fine library to equip herself for a career as one of the most theologically serious and philosophically competent theorists of her age” (9). Using her education to the greatest advantage, Astell courageously

enters a complex conversation with her male counterparts concerning the prevalent questions of her time involving the core of human understanding and responsibility.

Because of the popularity of her work, Astell had many biographers among her close contemporaries. George Ballard⁹, an eighteenth-century biographer, notes Astell's unique ability and virtue in his history of women writers. He calls Astell a "great ornament of her sex and country," and states that "having a piercing wit, a solid judgment, and tenacious memory, she made herself a complete mistress of everything she attempted to learn with the greatest ease imaginable" (306-7). Not all of the biographers, however, rain mere praises on Astell. Lady Louisa Stuart, granddaughter of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in her introduction to a late edition of Montagu's letters (1837), describes Astell's resistant deportment; she writes that Astell was "a very pious, exemplary woman, and a profound scholar, but as far from fair and elegant as any old schoolmaster of her time," who disdained compliments to her appearance, which she regarded as "insults in disguise, impertinently offered by men through a secret persuasion that all women were fools" (n. pag.). Stuart further asserts that Astell's entire life was devoted to proving the "mental equality of the sexes," and that,

⁹ According to Philip Hicks, George Ballard "wrote as a patriot touting the superiority of British women over their Continental counterparts." As an "amateur antiquarian," Ballard "conducted archival research and oral history interviews to unearth fresh material" as opposed to many biographers who sought a derogatory portrayal of women. He did not merely provide a catalogue of their works and social acquaintances; desiring to emphasize their virtues, he "highlighted their founding of almshouses, hospitals, and charity schools" (179).

Many a tract have the worms long ago eaten, or the pastry cooks demolished, in which she laid down this doctrine; exposing the injustice and tyranny of one sex, and maintaining the capacity of the other, if allowed fair play, for the highest attainments. (n.pag.)

Exposing the lack of liberty and justice for her sex became Astell's life's work. The significance of the contribution to women's rights in Astell's proposals for women's higher good lasted well into the early nineteenth century and influenced many of the women who followed her. As Mary Hays writes in 1803,

From having experienced in the study of letters a fruitful source of independent pleasures, she became solicitous to impart to her sex the satisfaction she enjoyed, to raise the general character of women, and to rescue them from ignorance and frivolity. (214)

The pleasure of an independent mind, free from the fanciful and superficial occupations reserved for women, becomes the touchstone of Astell's writing; from the first letter to John Norris, to the last debate with the Earl of Shaftesbury, she repeats the constant theme – liberty of mind and spirit – for women of her sex.

After the early nineteenth century, Astell's accomplishments, like that of so many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women writers, were ignored for the most part until the feminist scholars and activists of the twentieth century rediscovered her intellectual astuteness and her influence on the feminist movement. Unfortunately, according to Penny A. Weiss,

She had her work published in her lifetime, sometimes in several editions, but like other women intellectuals, she was first widely read, debated, and imitated, and

then satirized, plagiarized, and finally written out of mainstream political theory.

(64)

The rise of feminist activism in the early twentieth-century occasions a resurrection of eighteenth-century feminist works. Myra Reynolds includes a section on Astell in her 1920 biographies of learned women writers. Like Stuart, Reynolds emphasizes Astell's extreme focus on her cause:

Education, religion, politics, and social questions held her entire attention. She was never sidetracked into anything light or gay. We find no indications that she had any interest in art or general literature, that she had any of the recognized accomplishments, that she put any stress on scientific or linguistic attainments. (n. pag.)

Reynolds further points out that Astell was "beyond any woman and most men of her day in her command of the weapons of satire and irony" (n. pag.) Reynolds asserts that "no other woman had ideas so rigorously thought-out or so firmly expressed," and that she "did not write for money or fame," but she wrote "because she had a message" (n.pag.). Astell's writings and impressions speak for themselves in so far as her influence on women of her own time and women of the modern age. In the late twentieth century, feminist scholars such as Ruth Perry and Patricia Springborg revisit the author and her work.

Many scholars have dubbed her as the earliest British feminist; furthermore, D. N. Deluna asserts that by definition, "Astell is, arguably, England's first major feminist literary critic" (232) for her participation in the theological and political debates with some of the leading philosophers of her time. Remarkably, in Part II of *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, she

enters a metaphysical thicket far above the plane of educational theory, joining the company of Descartes, Malebranche, Arnauld, Nicole and Locke himself in a full-scale debate over the consequences of the Cartesian cogito. This work, presented as the second part of her famous proposal for a women's academy, in fact contains one of the most brilliant disquisitions of the age on Descartes' clear and distinct ideas, the possibility of certitude, and the ethical and religious consequences of the Cartesian position, the very topics that had occasioned Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, to the reception of which Astell's corpus belongs. (Springborg, *Mary Astell* 91)

In spite of her educational disadvantages as a woman, Astell's exceptional reasoning proves her theory that, "if allowed fair play," women could reach incredible heights. Ironically, her fame began with a correspondence with a male contemporary.

Her mentor and correspondent John Norris¹⁰ so admired her intellectual prowess in theological matters that in the Preface to the publication of their letters on the subject of the love of God, he glowingly describes her ability:

So admirable both your Thoughts and Expression upon it [the love of God], such Choiceness of Matter, such Weight of Sense, such Art and Order of Contrivance,

¹⁰ Cynthia Bryson details the relationship of Norris and Astell: "During 1694, the year of the book's [*A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*] (Part I) first edition, Astell was engaged in a written dialogue with her mentor John Norris. Norris, who is sometimes regarded as the last Cambridge Platonist, was a Cartesian scholar and feminist.... Norris's and Astell's written exchanges were primarily on the necessity for loving God" (44).

such Clearness and Strength of Reasoning, such Beauty of Language, such Address of Stile, such bright and lively Images and Colours of things, and such moving strains of the most natural and powerful Oratory, and all this seasoned with such a Tincture of Piety, and seeming to come from a true inward vital Principle of the most sincere and settled Devotion. (Preface n. pag.)

Through her correspondence with Norris, Astell demonstrates her transcendence of the traditional conception of female rationality and her ability to write on an intellectual and powerful level that surprised many in her audience. According to Joan Kinnaird,

The early correspondence with Norris reveals an identification with her sex as a whole and a personal commitment to the advancement of women that marks the true feminist. These characteristics, it may be argued, distinguish the feminist as a type quite distinct from two other related species – on the one hand, the “learned lady” who, while often critical of males, is concerned only with her own pursuits; and on the other hand, the dissident or unconventional woman whose behavior may violate society’s norms but who feels no need to protest or improve the condition of women in her society. (58)

Kinnaird concludes that Mary Astell was a “true feminist, a woman with a mission” (58).

Astell’s letters to Norris reveal her mission: “Fain wou’d I rescue my Sex, or at least as many of them as come within my little Sphere from that Meanness of Spirit into which the Generality of ‘em are sunk” (33). Her mission defines her both as an individualist and as an early apologist for the feminist ideology.

Like Milton, Astell also demonstrates an early fascination with epistemology, insisting Norris reconsider some of his observations on how humans worship God and debating with him

“the relative autonomy of human motivation and cognition” (Springborg 10). Astell, in turn, reveals her appreciation for Norris’ attitude toward their correspondence and debate in her first letter to him:

Sir, though some morose Gentlemen would perhaps remit me to the Distaff or the Kitchin, or at least to the Glass and the Needle, the proper Employments as they fancy of a Woman’s Life; yet expecting better things from the more Equitable and ingenious Mr. Norris, who is not so narrow-Soul’d as to confine Learning to his own Sex, or to envy it in ours, I presume to beg his Attention a little to the Impertinence of a Woman’s Pen....For though I can’t pretend to a Multitude of Books, Variety of Languages, the Advantages of Academical Education, or any Helps but what my own Curiosity affords; yet, *Thinking* is a Stock that no Rational Creature can want, if they know but how to use it; and this, you have taught me, with Purity and Prayer, (which I wish were as much practis’d as they are easie to practice) is the way and method to true Knowledge” (*Letters* 1-2).

In this letter, and in other correspondence with Norris, Astell describes, “in Cartesian language, what was to become her life-long programme” (Springborg 10). Furthermore, Astell shares the Cartesian philosophy and the influence of the Cambridge Platonists with both Norris and Milton.

1.5 Stoicism and Happiness

Astell’s work demonstrates her belief in the stoic concept of mental happiness. Like Milton, her theories rely heavily on the belief that “external objects are outside our control, and that true happiness arises from our inner life alone, something that is in our power” (Broad 8). Moreover, the basic tenets of her ideology reflect those Augustinian principles that “the human mind is

capable of understanding whatever it understands only by means of God's 'light' or epistemic 'illumination'" (Broad 10). As Jacqueline Broad suggests,

In a time when women were seen as intellectually deficient by nature, she was one of the first thinkers to embrace Cartesian rationalism in support of arguments for the equal rational capabilities of the sexes; she advocated dualism as a way in which women could define their selfhood in terms of their minds, rather than their bodies; and she used these insights to oppose the inferior education bestowed upon her sex. (n. pag.)

Earlier Cambridge Platonists had found in Descartes' philosophy a method by which to comprehend the mind in a Christian manner. As Joan Kinnaird asserts,

They eagerly embraced his scientific metaphysics, his proofs for the existence of God, and his dualistic epistemology, for they found in him, or so they thought, a redoubtable champion in the war against both scholastic obscurantism and atheistic materialism. (59)

Milton was certainly one of the Platonists sympathetic to Descartes' epistemological theories. As Astell embraces Cartesian duality and applies that logic of the separation of the mind and the body to her own sex, she plants the seeds of the beginning of a path to virtue for women.

The Cartesian model of physicality fits Astell's argument for rational equality for women. As Ruth Perry points out,

The celebration of reason in the seventeenth century provided women with the ammunition they needed for combating their second-class status. Once mind was separated from body, and elevated, nothing could be argued from physiology; women's reproduction capacity could no longer be held against them if all minds

were created equal and rationality was the cardinal virtue...the Enlightenment assumption of equal distribution of intellectual capacity was understood, by some, to include women. (Perry, "Radical Doubt" 473)

Because much of the philosophical discourse centered on theories that included epistemological discussion, women like Mary Astell were able to contribute to the discussion on equal terms. She becomes a Cartesian Platonist,

enthralled with a vision of an ordered universe, with an idea of God as divine rationality..., [and] from that allegiance she derived a radically new epistemology based on the thinking self, and this new conception of the mind's essential independence admirably served her purposes as a champion of women. (Kinnaird 60)

Another advantage to these conversations helped Astell and others participate, even though they had no formal education: "The new philosophical practice did not require formal education or even familiarity with classical texts; anyone who could meditate and think logically about that meditation might contribute to knowledge" (Perry, "Radical Doubt" 475). Astell, who believed in divine Truth, took advantage of the window afforded her to make the case for women's inclusion in what was one of the most important debates of her time.

The Cartesian model further informs Astell's plan to achieve virtue through contemplation, the religious equivalent for meditation. In her work, Astell transforms, as Shannon Miller suggests, "the language of physical beauty into knowledge and an interior, intellectual beauty," in which she "redefines the terms of these women's appeal as she transforms outsides into insides" (Miller 219). This transformation mirrors Milton's formula for abandoning the trivial, his plan for contemplation and reflection of God and his creation, and his

result of right reason and proairesis. Moreover, as Astell writes about the mental capacity of her sex, her proposals and arguments “earned her a reputation as the earliest and most trenchant eighteenth-century analyst of gender relations,” and her work, like Milton’s, calls for individual human liberty and “relied more heavily on deductive reasoning, Christian Platonism, and her own personal experience than on historical examples” (Hicks 177). Like the Cambridge Platonists, “she blends Descartes’ rationalist arguments with the moral spirit of Platonism in order to affirm the reality of the spiritual world” (Broad n. pag.). Milton’s own stoic philosophy, influenced by the Cambridge Platonists, anticipates Astell’s rational approach to the education and moralization of women. Milton’s path to virtue, adopted by Astell, makes many of the strides in eighteenth-century feminism possible.

In her reliance on divine illumination, Astell echoes Milton’s theories concerning the temple of the mind. Many scholars have noted the Platonist influence in her work. Joan Bennett provides insight into Astell’s access and use of Cartesian, and consequently Platonist philosophy:

As was the case for many of her late seventeenth-century contemporaries, Astell’s faith in rational argument and the potential power of ‘the Mind’ was inspired by her understanding of the writings of Rene Descartes, whose philosophical method involving personal memoir and reflection seemed to allow for the ability of each rational creature to arrive at truth simply by proceeding with careful logic through to a clear perception. For this mental activity, access to tutors, schools, and universities was not necessary; one need only reason one’s way carefully to God’s truth. (Bennett *Mary Astell et.al.* 142)

For early feminists, the separation of the human mind from the gendered body translates into hope for equality. Cynthia Bryson observes that Astell and other Cartesian women

saw the division between mind and body as a foundational way of eliminating sex-linked theories, which suggested an inferiority in the minds and souls of women, even going so far as to suggest these gender distinctions belonged to the category of ‘error.’ (Bryson 41)

Since most other women of her time enjoyed only a second-hand education, Astell and others voraciously read those works that were available to them. Accordingly,

the Cambridge Platonists provided an accessible means of intellectual stimulation for Astell and other women: because their works were usually composed in the vernacular, and because here was a new way of doing philosophy which required no university training, only an alert learner willing to reflect on his or her own thought processes...the period’s new focus on the importance of the workings of the mind must have reinforced Astell’s conviction that the greatest course of human fulfillment resided with committing oneself to an intellectual life. (Deluna 233)

Women like Astell advocated for “educational opportunities, protecting women from abusive spouses, control over property and children, and even political privileges,” justifying their arguments by using Cartesian philosophy (Hicks 175). Astell not only appreciated the Cartesian philosophy, she projected what she found through her work.

1.6 Milton’s Influence

Astell’s education and preparation for a career as a writer included an extensive examination of Milton’s work, and as with her resistance to other male philosophers, she is not afraid to take Milton to task. Ruth Perry observes that Astell “read avidly – Milton, Spenser, and the ‘matchless Orinda’” (48). In *Some Reflections on Marriage*, Astell states,

For whatever may be said against Passive-Obedience in another case, I suppose there's no Man but likes it very well in this; how much soever Arbitrary Power may be dislik'd on a Throne, not Milton...nor any of the Advocates of Resistance, would cry up Liberty to poor *Female Slaves*, or plead for the Lawfulness of Resisting a private Tyranny. (27)

Whereas Astell acknowledges the power of Milton's resistance against tyranny, she denies he would include women in his fight for liberty. According to Marilyn Williamson,

Only Astell understood the crucial interpretations of marriage in her time hinged on notions of authority, and she made a rueful mockery of thinkers like Milton, who brought down a patriarchal king but would preserve a patriarchal marriage and family. (88)

Some critics have suggested a deeper importance to Astell's chastisement, however, than her surface insistence that Milton would not advocate the same freedom for women.

In naming Milton specifically among the advocates for liberty, Astell acknowledges his unique place in the revolution of individual freedom of thought. As John Rogers observes,

For Astell, Milton remains the subversive revolutionary whose treatises against the tyranny of the Stuart monarchy, whose treatises against the tyranny of Charles the First established his reputation as a liberator, a liberator of all of the oppressed and enslaved citizens of English, and that's Milton's rhetoric; that rhetoric belongs to Milton himself. But Astell resents, of course...the limitation of his subversiveness. He refused to extend his critique of tyranny in the political realm to a critique of man's domestic tyranny over woman in the private realm, in the domestic sphere. (Rogers n. pag.)

Astell's own subversive leaning aligns with Milton's treatments of liberty and responsibility. Since Milton establishes such a powerful rhetorical voice that is universally heard, she therefore borrows from Milton's language and argument when establishing a subversive voice for women. What results from Astell's thorough knowledge of Milton's ideology and her willingness to utilize his methods is an "uncomfortable affinity between two competing, equally progressive social movements...the strange proximity...of Milton's rhetoric of political liberation to the proto-feminist rhetoric of domestic liberation" (Rogers n.pag.). From the stoicism of her own education, and her emulation of and engagement with her male contemporaries, Astell creates a unique feminine philosophy that transcends a gendered audience and finds common spiritual nobility in all human beings. Whereas Milton advocates for religious and intellectual liberty for all men, Astell adds women in the debate.

In many instances, Astell uses Milton's own rhetoric to prove her arguments to her rigidly skeptical audience. Ruth Perry notes the significance of her early contribution to a revolutionary perception of the female mind and ability:

Astell's philosophical idealism was also the source of her originality, for it enabled her to set aside the customary hierarchy of values in English society.... Her novel observations about the position of women in the culture and their demeaned status in marriage were part and parcel of her generalized refusal to accept anything as true or right, without subjecting it to radical doubt. To her, 'He for God only, she for God in him' was not a clear and distinct idea. Again, and again she exhorted her readers to think for themselves and to contemplate the meaning of their lives with minds cleared of mystifying preconceptions. (328-29)

Just as Milton questions the “customary hierarchy of values” in the context of political and theological human liberty, Astell expands those same questions to include women. The very fact that Astell engages on a level intellectual plane with Milton and other reformers of her time proves female equality in the realm of ideas. As Joseph Wittreich concludes,

Thus for Mary Astell, who looks to modern rather than ancient poets as the educators of contemporary women, Milton’s voice is joined with Spenser’s: ‘I reverence the *Fairy Queen*,’ she says, and ‘am rais’d, and elevated with *Paradise Lost*.’ If Milton sits on the margins of this debate in his own century, he moves to its center in the eighteenth century. (Wittreich 49-50)

Through Milton’s stoic argument for the abandonment of fancy and the elevation of the mind, Astell discovers a strategy to argue “the central tenet of the Cambridge Platonists (that philosophical enquiry can enhance Christian ways) should not be understood as a directive to men only” (Deluna 239). Her strategies make Astell a formidable opponent in the debates of personal liberty in the enlightenment period.

1.7 The Noise of Folly¹¹

However, Astell must first address one hurdle that is unique to the perception of her sex and one with which her male counterparts do not have to contend. In her seminal work, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, Astell identifies the origin of female folly as a deficiency in education, resulting in the inability to make sound moral choices, the proairesis necessary for virtue. She entreats her fellow women to abandon temporal concerns for the improvement of their eternal minds:

¹¹ “Sweet bird that shunn’st the noise of folly, / Most musical, most melancholy!” (Milton, *Il Penseroso*).

What your own sentiments are, I know not, but I cannot without pity and resentment reflect, that those Glorious Temples on which your kind Creator has bestow'd such exquisite workmanship, shou'd enshrine to better than Egyptian Deities, be like a tarnish'd Sepulchre, which for all its glittering, has nothing within but Emptiness or Putrefaction! (54)

She further exhorts her fellow women to “abandon that Old, and therefore one woul'd think, unfashionable employment of pursuing Butter flies and Trifles!” (55). Moreover, Astell asks women to “no longer drudge on in the dull beaten road of Vanity and Folly,” and to “break the enchanted Circle that custom has plac'd us in” (55). The “tyrant Custom” has denigrated women's intellect and kept them chasing temporal and immediate fancies instead of preparing their minds for eternal, higher ideals.

Astell asserts in her proposal that folly itself is moral dilemma that prohibits right choices:

the Cause therefore of the defects we labour under, is, if not wholly, yet at least in the first place, to be ascribed to the mistakes of our Education; which like an Error in the first Concoction, spreads its ill Influence through all our Lives. (59-60)

These defects, “ignorance and a narrow education, lay the Foundation of Vice, and Imitation and Custom rear it up” (*Proposal* 67). So-called accomplished women of Astell's time were prepared for superficial graces, but ill-prepared for the mental acuteness needed for a virtuous life. This concern occupies much of the eighteenth-century discussions of women's education, culminating in Mary Wollstonecraft's argument for equal education for men and women. Moreover, the busyness of the social scene distracted them from the significant pursuit of knowledge that could

truly enrich their lives. Astell asserts that the distracted woman cannot hear the inner voice of God, and therefore she cannot exercise right reason:

Add to this the hurry and noise of the World, which does generally so busy and pre-engage us, that we have little time, and less inclination to stand still and reflect on our own Minds...we cannot attend to the Dictates of our Reason, nor to the soft whispers and winning persuasive of the divine Spirit, but whose assistance were we dispos'd to make use of it, we might shake off these Follies, and regain our Freedom. (*Proposal* 68)

Astell asserts that women may “shake off” those trivial pursuits that hinder them from a mental awakening to the things of God. Only when the fanciful preconceptions of the female mind are overcome can women focus their attention to the larger, controversial discussions of the day from a feminine point of view.

Astell frequently uses strong language to force women to comprehend the dangers of fanciful thinking and take responsibility for their own minds and souls. Astell herself sought

to preserve herself from the interruption of frivolous visits, from such persons as relieve themselves from the burthen of time unemployed by breaking in upon their more rational and industrious acquaintance, she was accustomed, from her window, jestingly, to inform intruders that “Mrs. Astell was not at home.” (Hays 216)

In *The Christian Religion*, she describes “a happiness after our own wild Fancies, tho’ it be contrary to all the rules of order and right Reason” as a disappointment to the God who creates women with the same human nobility and divine image as men; furthermore, she explains “that God cannot gratify us in our Folly but by denying Himself, that is, by acting contrary to the

essential Perfections of His own Nature” (92). Astell’s insistence on cognizance on a higher plain may be seen as “tactfully upbraiding them for having preoccupied themselves with frivolity instead of great truths and religious duties” (Deluna 237). This insistence on higher learning and understanding has “the power to dignify women as the pursuit of physical beauty or of social amusement does not” (Deluna 231). Thus, Astell’s purpose for the admonition of abandoning the fanciful and surface accomplishments in her works,

contributed not a little towards awakening their minds and lessening their esteem for those trifling amusements which steal away too much of their time; and towards putting them upon employing their faculties the right way, in the pursuit of knowledge. (Ballard 307)

Therefore, to grant dignity and humanity to her sex, Astell attempts “to browbeat women for allowing themselves to be denigrated to the position of beautiful ‘object’ in their husband’s homes, for painting themselves with cosmetics, and for adorning themselves outwardly with little or no self-respect for their own minds” (Bryson 42). Jacqueline Broad describes women’s first right choice: “Above all, Astell offers advice on how a woman can learn to judge for herself about the true source of happiness, and come to live up to the dignity of her nature as a free and rational human being” (16). Ironically, Astell’s strongest argument for women’s education mirrors that of Milton’s treatise on marriage and divorce: just as an educated woman alleviates the misery of an intellectually unsuitable companion in the marriage relationship, an enlightened man allows for the intellectual progress of his wife.

1.8 A Marriage of True Minds¹²

Astell posits her most ardent defense for the education of women and the result of women's unfortunate marital circumstances in her treatise *Reflections on Marriage*. Ruth Perry calls this treatise

a satiric peroration about the inequality of husbands and wives in marriage, concluding that no woman ought to marry unless the man she chose could prove himself to be of sufficient moral stature to play the part of disinterested custodian to his wife's virtues, a role infinitesimally few men were capable of. (Perry, "Two Forgotten Wits" 433)

Like Milton, Astell uses the subject of the marriage relationship to address broader political concerns: Penny Weiss suggests that "Astell's analysis of marriage uses and reconsiders such central political notions as obligation, obedience, consent, liberty, and tyranny" (66). Joan Kinnaird agrees that Astell insists on the "right to reject a suitor whom one could not in good faith hope to love," for, like many

other feminist-minded women of her time, she inveighed bitterly against those parents and guardians who were so concerned with property settlements or social advantage that they forced their unwilling charges into marriages beneath their social rank or into marriage with detested partners.¹³ (67-68)

In the Preface of the treatise, she lays out the consequences of a wife's inadequate education as the prime reason for misery in marriage; she claims whereas boys are rewarded with "all

¹² "Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments," Shakespeare's Sonnet 116.

¹³ Kinnaird compares Astell's insistence on marriage for love to Lady Mary Chudleigh's *The Ladies Defence*, "Unhappy they, who by their Duty led / Are made the Partners of a hated Bed."

imaginable encouragement; not only Fame...but also Title, Authority, Power, and Riches," girls are "restrain'd, frown'd upon, and beat, not for but from the Muses; Laughter and Ridicule that never-failing Scare-Crow is set up to drive them from the Tree of Knowledge" (n. pag.). She laments both the tragedy of a woman who must bend to the authority of an insensible husband and, like Milton, she vividly describes the misery of an intellectual unequal marriage union. Astell begins her argument with a description of the wife under the yoke of an intolerable union to a foolish man:

To be yok'd for Life to a disagreeable Person and Temper; to have Folly and Ignorance tyrannize over Wit and Sense; to be contradicted in every thing one does or says, and bore down not by Reason but Authority; to be denied ones most innocent desires, for no other cause but the Will and Pleasure of an absolute Lord and Master, whose Follies a Woman with all her Prudence cannot hide, and whose Commands she cannot but despise at the same time she obeys them; is a misery none can have a just Idea, but those who have felt it. (4)

Astell then immediately turns to the poor choices and fanciful reactions women have to disagreeable partner, stating that "nothing can justify the revenging the Injuries we receive from other, upon our selves" (4). She insists that had the woman been better educated and "made a right Improvement of her Wit and Sense," she would not have sought "relief by such imprudent, not to say scandalous Methods, as the running away in Disguise with a spruce Cavalier...nor diverting her self with such Childish, Ridiculous, or Ill-natur'd Amusements" (4). Moreover, she warns against the flatterer, "for nothing is in truth a greater outrage than Flattery and feign'd Submissions," who is secretly thinking,

I have a very mean Opinion both of your Understanding and Vertue, you are weak enough to be impos'd on, and vain enough to snatch at the Bait I throw; there's no danger of your finding out my meaning, or disappointing me of my Ends...so it is in our power to reduce you to your first obscurity, or to somewhat worse, to Contempt; you are therefore only on your good behavior, and are like to be no more than what we please to make you. (24)

This secret musing is, according to Astell, the "Flatterer's Language aside...the true sense of his heart" (24). Astell's open mockery of the reality of men's perception of women adds to her strong admonition for women to be wise and discerning.

Astell further admonishes the men who choose a contemptible and ignorant wife, relegating to the men the responsibility of their own perception of women. She asks,

But how can a Man respect his Wife when he has a contemptible Opinion of her and her Sex? When from his own Elevation he looks down on them as void of Understanding, and full of Ignorance and Passion, so that Folly and a Woman are equivalent Terms with him? Can he think there is any Gratitude due her whose services he exacts as Duty? Because she was made to be a Slave to his Will, and has no higher end than to Serve and Obey him! (47)

Furthermore, Astell insists that men must decide "whether or no Women are allow'd to have Souls" (51); and, if so, is it not then in the best interest of their wives to encourage them to improve their minds for their salvation's sake. She hopes "our Christian Brethren are not of the Turk's Opinion, That Women have no Souls" (*The Christian Religion* 303). To the wives, she suggests what must be done "to make the Matrimonial Yoke tolerable to themselves as well as

pleasing to their Lords and Masters” (52). To abandon the folly that enslaves the feminine mind, she must decide

that the World is an empty and deceitful Thing, that those Enjoyments which appear'd so desirable at a distance, which rais'd our Hopes and Expectations to such a mighty Pitch, which we so passionately coveted, and so eagerly pursued, vanish at our first approach, leaving nothing behind them but the Folly of Delusion, and the pain of disappointed Hopes. (52)

The danger of ignorance is so profound, a woman's virtue and honor may “be ruin'd by a little Ignorance or Indiscretion” (61). It behooves men and women, then, to educate the feminine mind, for “according to the way their Time is spent, they are destin'd to Folly and Impertinence, to say no worse, and which is yet more inhuman, they are blamed for that ill Conduct they are not suffer'd to avoid” (62). Astell rails against a system in which “so much and no more of the World is shewn them, as serves to weaken and corrupt their Minds, to give them wrong Notions, and busy them in mean pursuits” (62). A woman's inadequacy begins at birth, when “Women are from their very Infancy debarr'd those Advantages, with the want of which, they are afterwards reproached, and nursed up in those vices which will hereafter be upbraided to them. So partial are Men as to expect Brick where they afford no Straw” (60).¹⁴ Astell's entire body of work

¹⁴ Astell employs the allusion of Pharaoh's reaction to Moses and Aaron when they insist that he release the Hebrews from slavery in order to be able to properly worship their God: “Therefore Pharaoh gave commandment the same day unto the taskmasters of the people, and to their officers, saying, Ye shall give the people no more straw, to make brick (as in time past) *but* let them go and gather them straw themselves. Notwithstanding lay upon them the number of brick, which they made in *time* past, diminish nothing thereof: for they be idle, therefore they cry, saying, Let us go to offer sacrifice unto our God” (Exodus 5:6-8). Astell astutely compares women being denied an education with the Hebrew's slavery under the Pharaoh of Egypt. Women were expected to gather what scant information they could and were then ridiculed and kept in bondage for their lack of knowledge.

addresses this one purpose: the redefinition of feminine virtue through the pursuit of higher knowledge and divine inspiration. Whether women marry, or like Astell, choose to remain single, their perception of who they are as human beings determines the value of the choices they make.

Unfortunately, after the lively conversation concerning freedom and compatibility in marriage that persists throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the concept of enclosure and containment returns in the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Even though the eighteenth century, with its “evolving system of capitalism, made it possible for the ‘odd’ woman to survive as an atomized individual,” (Perry, “Radical Doubt” 475), independent from family protection, and usually in an urban setting, the notions of a woman’s independence reverse at the end of the century. By that time Astell’s popular work was waning:

Not until later in the eighteenth century was the new configuration of restraint woven to keep women in their places, the gentle tyranny that Lawrence Stone¹⁶ has called the “companionate marriage,” which assumed women’s responsibility for the happiness of her family, a somewhat masochistic spiritual superiority, and

¹⁵ Astell writes *Some Reflections on Marriage* (1700) in part as a reaction to writers such as Robert Filmer, who had called for absolute rule in monarchy and marriage in his 1680 *Patriarcha* on the basis of natural and religious law. According to Sharon Achinstein, Astell “argues that the inequalities between men and women perceptible in the world are not a matter of divine command to Adam, but merely an historical fact, a matter of custom and prejudice” (20). By the end of the eighteenth century, the political and social pendulums swing back to restraint of women based on their natural weakness and need for protection.

¹⁶ Lawrence Stone (1919-1991) was a renowned professor of history, first at Oxford, and then at Princeton University. His specialties include the history of marriage in early modern England. In *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, Stone writes, “New claims concerning the statues and rights of women were set in motion by the repudiation of monarchical patriarchy in the state in 1688, and were publicized by a handful of zealot feminists at the end of the seventeenth century. Most notable among them were Hannah Woolley, Aphra Behn, Mary Astell and Lady Chudeigh” (340). Rpt. in Joan Kinnaird.

a claustrophobic notion of gentility and middle-class respectability. (Perry, "Radical Doubt" 475).

Because women have the same image of God and the same souls as men, Astell also attempts to convince women of their value as human beings. She asks that women not "entertain such a degrading thought of our own worth, as to imagine that our Souls were given us only for the service of our Bodies, and that the best improvement we can make of these, is to attract the eyes of men" (*Proposal* 55). Astell further suggests that women "not neglect that particle of Divinity with you, which must survive" (*Proposal* 52). Astell entreats her audience not to be deceived as to their true interests: "This is a Matter infinitely more worthy your Debates, than what Colours are most agreeable, or what's the Dress becomes you best? Your Glass will not do you half so much service as a serious reflection on your own Minds" (52). She insists that the pursuit of the knowledge of higher ideals would "help you to surpass Men as much in Vertue and Ingenuity, as you do in Beauty; that you may not only be as lovely, but as wise as Angels" (*Proposal* 51). A woman with the inner beauty that shines through virtue transcends the temporal and temporary trappings of life: Astell says that the purpose for the education of women, "is to fix that Beauty, to make it lasting and permanent, which Nature with all its helps of Art cannot secure; and to place it out of reach of Sickness and Old Age, by transferring it from a corruptible Body to an immortal Mind" (*Proposal* 51). The immortal mind may find a paradise within, far from the corruptible and trivial pursuits attributed to women and the consequences of spiritual amazement.

One of the significant debates of the Restoration period was the controversial idea of female education and spiritual training, and in her contribution to this debate, Astell echoes Milton's ideology. Astell repeatedly demonstrates her engagement with *Paradise Lost* and

Milton's motif of "reflection, image, and its relation to the gendered hierarchy that Milton's Eve voices"; for example, Astell's garden paradise, "one which makes education available for women, transforms the central image in Eve's creation to allow for an alternative kind of reflection, one moving inside" (Miller 165). Miller concludes Astell's "richly contradictory portrait of Eve, knowledge, and the dangers of temptation allows her to fashion education as an escape from the fall itself" (164). Astell is one of the earliest women writers who seeks a path from the subservient consequence of the fall to a new and redemptive definition of virtue. In addition to Miller's observations of Astell's engagement with the Eve of Milton's epic, Astell's work toward women's intellectual equality encompasses other portions of Milton's ideology concerning virtue that were heretofore only associated with men.

1.9 Contemplation

In her vision for female education and virtue, Astell concurs with Milton's idea of an inner temple in the mind wherein contemplation may meet with right reason and discernment, thus relieving the amazement of spiritual darkness through the Spirit of Truth. In the preface to her correspondence with John Norris writes,

An affectionate Sense of God will discover more of him to us, than all the dry Study and Speculation of Scholastick Heads, and the Fire of our Hearts will give the best and truest Light to our Eyes, and when all is done the Love of God is the best Contemplation....They that contemplate the Face of God can tell, it may be, in some measure how lovely he is, and the very Transport of their High Passions will furnish them with Expression. (n. pag.)

As a result of Norris's advice to contemplate the "Face of God" in all his loveliness, Astell discovers a way to express her paradisaal transformation through her reflection of his glory. In

one of her letters to John Norris, she writes, “So the soul of Man being made on purpose for the Contemplation and Love of God, whenever it ceases to pursue that End, must needs be put out of the Order of its Nature” (*Letters* 56), an allusion to Satan’s portrayal of Adam as “for contemplation and valour formed” (*Paradise Lost* IV.297). Astell appropriates this image and includes her own gender in the analysis of human nature and purpose; as Adam was made for contemplation that leads to divine knowledge, so too are the daughters of Eve. And, like Milton, Astell insists that a source of knowledge innately lies within the human mind, a divine reason that transcends temporal wisdom. She explains this divine wisdom in her treatise *The Christian Religion*:

True Knowledge, and not Science falsely to call, is a Divine thing, as an excellent Pen¹⁷ has prov’d it. For to Know is to perceive Truth, and the Perception of Truth is a Participation of God Himself who is the Truth, and the Participation of God is the Perfection of the Mind. (294)

God’s participation in the search for truth is the divine illumination that occurs in moments of contemplation. This seeking contemplation has as its object the love and glory of God, and this kind of contemplation replaces the trivial and vain exercises afforded women of Astell’s time. She further notes:

that we very much Dishonour both our Lord and our Selves if we who were Created for the Noble Employment of Contemplating and Loving God, and

¹⁷ According to Jacqueline Broad, John Norris “is the excellent pen to whom Astell refers, and the passage in question appears in the second part of his *Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World* (1704)” (40).

preparing our Souls by His Assistance for the endless enjoyment of Him in Glory, shou'd take up with the base and contemptible office of making Provision for the flesh. (*The Christian Religion* 303)

Astell invites women into this contemplation of God and his love in her proposal for their education in order to ignite that part of their minds that would lead them to perfection, and with “greatest exactness tread in the Paths of Vertue” (*Proposal* 52). Astell’s path, like Milton’s, leads from contemplation of God’s glory to virtue.

In her second educational treatise, Astell further advocates for a life absent from temporal vanities and points her audience to the contemplation of divine knowledge. She describes a woman who would attend her school as one who “devotes herself entirely to the Contemplation and Fruition of her Beloved” and suggests the Edenic environment is,

A Type and Antepast of Heav’n, where your employment will be as there, to magnify God, to love one another, and to communicate that useful *knowledge*, which by the due improvement of your time in Study and Contemplation you will obtain. (*Proposal II* 75-76)

Astell’s solution “is to reject sensate knowledge in favor of the contemplation of pure abstract ideas, accepting for truth only what one can clearly and distinctly perceive” (Bryson 46).

Perception of the divine truth involves supernatural interference in the temple of the mind.

However, in *The Christian Religion*, she acknowledges that many view contemplation of God’s glory as a form of enthusiasm,¹⁸ or ecstasy:

¹⁸ In the eighteenth century, “enthusiasm” was a term that described an unnatural revelation from the gods, or even an indwelling of a hellish spirit. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an eighteenth-century definition of “enthusiasm” is a “fancied inspiration,” and an ill-regulated or misdirected religious emotion, extravagance of religious speculation.” Furthermore, Samuel Johnson defines “enthusiasm as “a vain belief of private revelation; a vain confidence of divine

But the Contemplation of Immaterial Beings and Abstract Truths, which are the Noblest Objects of the Mind, is look'd on as Chimerical¹⁹ and a sort of Madness; and to study to come up to the pure Morals of the Gospel, is in their account Visionary. (295-96)

Astell denounces those who insist that contemplation of the divine does not result in divine illumination in the temple of the mind. Furthermore, she asserts that this divine illumination must be accessible to women:

Being the Soul was created for the contemplation of Truth as well as for the fruition of Good, is it not cruel and unjust to preclude Women from the knowledge of the one, as well as from the enjoyment of the other? Especially since the Will is blind, and cannot chuse but by the direction of the Understanding; or to speak more properly, since the Soul always *Wills* according as she *Understands*, so that if she *Understands* amiss, she *Wills* amiss. (*Proposal* 80)

Moreover, Astell suggests that since “our Beatitude consists in the contemplation of divine Truth and Beauty, as well as the fruition of his Goodness, can Ignorance be a fit preparation for Heaven?” (*Proposal* 81). Astell, therefore, concludes that a woman’s salvation depends on her ability to overcome ignorance through knowledge and discover God’s truth in contemplation.

favour or communication” (*Dictionary*). Astell distinguishes her idea of divine illumination within the context of those who used “enthusiasm” or revelation as a means to make war on the monarchy or as doctrinal evidence in religious debates.

¹⁹ Johnson defines “chimerical” as “imaginary; fanciful; wildly, vainly, or fantastically conceived” (*Dictionary*).

Astell does not limit her discussion of contemplation and truth to women. In her treatise *Bart'lemy Fair; or, an Enquiry after Wit*, she exhorts men to better use their reason:

For our Men of Wit, with all their Acuteness, know not how to find a Medium between being fond of *Praise and forc'd Applause*, and insensible of *Malicious Affronts*; between using their Reason Reverently, and then as *freely* as they please, in contemplating the Divine Being, and misusing their Imagination in framing Senseless as well as Profane Conceits of His Adorable Nature! (108-9)

According to Kinnaird, Astell “found noble institutions and noble aims corrupted by ignoble men” (70). She audaciously engages in philosophical and theological debates with men because women are not alone in the temptation to misuse the gifts of God. She preaches the same lesson of a capable and illuminated mind to all:

And what greater Satisfaction and Glory can a Man enjoy in this present Life, than the Approbation of his own Mind, of Wise and Good Men, and even of GOD Himself? Too many of you will meet with in this evil World, who, sensible of the Loss of their own Innocence, and with it of true Felicity and Peace of Mind, will endeavor with the Malice and Cunning of the Old Serpent whose Votaries they are, and whose Work they do, to deprive you of your Happiness. (133-34)

She continues her argument for truth and happiness with a call to embrace “Human Felicity” and abandon “precarious Fancy,”

not to be measured by any other Rule than every particular Person’s capricious Humor; allowing only that right Reason and uncorrupted Nature, and not Opinion and Vitiated Appetites, are the Standard of Human Pleasures: It will then undeniably follow, that he is the Happiest Man who lives most like a Man; that is,

who Lives according to Reason, which is living according to Nature, to the Nature of a Man, tho' not of a Brute. (139)

For all of their advantages in education and social freedoms, men often fail to live up to their so-called superior intellectual status. They, too, must choose wisely to be happy in this life. Astell's formula for happiness knows no gender boundaries, but applies to all human beings created in the image of God and endowed with human dignity and reason.

Like Milton, Astell insists that the comprehension of pure truth from the heavenly realm is contingent on a pure spirit. In *An Apology for Smectymnuus*, Milton writes that "he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself be a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things" (850). Astell, too, insists that "she then who desires a clear Head must have a pure Heart" (*Proposal II* 127). She further warns that "if we search to the bottom I believe we shall find, that the Corruption of the Heart contributes *more* to the Cloudiness of the Head, than the Clearness of our Light does to the regularity of our Affections" (*Proposal II* 130). In other words, Astell shares Milton's view that education and knowledge are not enough to produce virtue. Another element, a divine revelation that inspires a longing for the ability to clearly choose right, must follow temporal knowledge. Moreover, Astell echoes Milton's theological remedy for the disturbance of the reason to a fallen humanity: the Son of God. In Part II of *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, she asks if we are equal to the sacrifice of the Son on our behalf:

Has our bountiful Lord set no limits to our Happiness but the Capacity of our Nature, and shall we set less, and not strive to extend our Capacities to their utmost reach? Has the obliging Son of GOD thought no difficulties too mighty, no Pain too great to undergo for the Love of us, and shall we be so disingenuous and

ungrateful as to think a few hours of Solitude, a little Meditation and Watchfulness too much to return to his Love? (133)

Astell's searching for the Spirit of Truth suggests, "is there no remedy for this disorder, since All are not irrecoverable lost?" (136). She concludes that "to Resolve to be Industrious and to think no Pains too much to purchase Truth," and regardless of the personal cost,

Honestly to search after Truth for no other end but the Glory of God, by the accomplishing of our Own and our Neighbours Minds, and when we have humbly implor'd as now we may very well hope for the Divine Assistance, that the Father of Lights will shine upon us, and that He who is *the Way, the Truth and the Life* will lead us to all Truth. (136-37)

Astell's notion of Truth is that the savior of the world affords her and every woman the same soul and light as every man. The light of God dispels spiritual darkness for all who contemplate the holiness of God and receive the illumination that is equally available to all human beings. She discovers her truth in the same Jesus who brought the Spirit of Truth in Milton's *Paradise Regained*, "to dwell / In pious hearts, an inward oracle / To all truth requisite for men to know" (I.462-64), and broke through the spiritual darkness that befell humanity at the fall. She writes,

Tho' we are Naturally Dark and Ignorant, Yet in *his light we may hope to see Light*...For then he who is *The Light that Lighteth every one who comes in to the World*, the Immutable Truth, and Uncreated Wisdom of His Father, will *Teach us in the way of Wisdom and lead us in right Paths*. (165)

Light for its own sake, however, is useless without free will and choice. Women, therefore, are free to choose aright because "all may Think, may use their own Faculties rightly, and consult

the Master who is within them” (168). Astell assures women that their true liberty lies on the path to virtue.

1.10 Reason and Choice

Astell determines, like Milton before her, that right choice follows right reason, and the sufficiency to make right choices proceeds from contemplation of the truth of God. Astell says that “having once sufficient proofs of the Truth of Revelation, I have no more to do but to receive the Divine Pleasure, and to submit to the *whole Will of God*” (*The Christian Religion* (51). For Astell, any “happiness after our own wild Fancies, tho’ it be contrary to all the rules of order and right reason” is absurd in the face of the fact that God has “given us sufficient light to discern between the Evil and the Good” and “Motives strong enough to incline us to pursue the one and to avoid the other” (*The Christian Religion* 92). The Spirit of Truth shines divine light on fanciful pleasures, showing them for what they are – a detriment to the peace of the paradise within. For Astell, the redemption of truth and virtue is the remedy for the spiritual and intellectual darkness of a corrupt nature.

In *The Christian Religion*, Astell strategically places the blame for the corrupt nature, not on Eve’s, but on Adam’s failure. She writes,

I shou’d have felt the weakness of human Nature, and its inability to live according to right Reason, and to arrive at that perfection it incessantly desires, tho’ I had never seen the Scriptures: But I shou’d not have known that Adam’s Sin was the cause of this, and that since I spring from him, he cou’d derive no other than his own deprav’d and degenerate Nature to me. My deviations from right Reason, or the Sins that I am conscious of, and that regret, fear, and disorder

of Mind which naturally and necessarily attends them, wou'd have rais'd in me
passionate desires of Pardon and Reconciliation with my Maker. (49-50)

Like Milton's Eve, who understands that by her "the promised seed shall all restore" (*Paradise Lost* XII.623), Astell seeks to reconcile through her relationship with Christ the corrupt and degenerate human nature from spiritual darkness and mental confusion as a result of her regret for her weakness; this conviction causes desire for redemption. Broad further suggests that, "for Astell, the regulation of the passions is the key to attaining virtue, a disposition to feel and act in the right manner, toward the right ends, in accordance with right reason" (24). In order to alter a human disposition and train the mind toward reason, divine illumination is required.

The mind that is disposed toward higher good and virtue attains the finest human rationality, as opposed to the brutish reactionary mind clothed in confusion. Astell writes,

It appears that there are some degrees of Knowledge necessary before there can
be any Human Acts, for till we are capable of Chusing our own Actions and
directing them by some Principle, tho we Move and Speak and so many such like
things, we live not the Life of a Rational Creature but only of an Animal. (*A
Serious Proposal to the Ladies II* 129)

The human mind, not male or female but simply human, that is seasoned with divine reason has the power to choose according to the spirit of truth. Of course, this power also means the human will is free to disobey, just as Adam and Eve were free to fall, for when

a Truth comes thwart our Passions, when it dares contradict our mistaken
Pleasures and supposed Interests, let the Light shine never so clear we shut our
Eyes against it, will not be convinced not because there's any want of Evidence,
but because we're unwilling to Obey. (*A Serious Proposal to the Ladies II* 130)

The power to disobey attends the power to choose – what Milton and Astell call free will.

Human beings bear the culpability of the choices they make, for as Norris points out,

that the natural tendency of the Will being from the Author of our Natures must need be right, it being impossible that God should put a false Bias upon the Soul, and that therefore 'tis the Perfection and Duty of every rational Creature to conform those Determinations of his Will that are free to that which is natural, or in other words to take care that the Love of his Nature and the Love of his Choice conspire in one, that they both agree in the same Motion, and con-center on the same Object. (*Letters* 145)

According to Norris, human nature and desire must conform to the Author of both; Astell concurs with Norris because she understands that contemplation and knowledge of the holy God drives human desire toward right reason and obedience. She says, “For it is the prerogative of Infinite Wisdom, the Supreme or Divine Reason, and of this only, to be the measure of Truth” (*The Christian Religion* 49). The Spirit of Truth resides in the “station which God has plac’d us in; and that this provision is to be estimated by the measures of the Gospel, by Right Reason, and the Judgment of Prudent and Sober Persons, not by our suppos’d and imaginary occasions” (*The Christian Religion* 349). The human being who enjoys the luxury of understanding truth is truly free, for she “Perfet within, no outward aid require; / And all temptation to transgress repel” (*Paradise Lost* 8.642-3) may choose for herself what is right and beneficial for her. Right reason restores the liberty that was lost in Eden.

Spiritual and intellectual liberty produces within a powerful kind of virtue that may lift women from an inferior social and political position. Astell writes, “He and he only is a Freeman who acts according to Right Reason, and obeys the Commands of the Sovereign Lord of all, who

has not put the Liberty of His Creatures in any one's power but in their own" (*The Christian Religion* 279). Liberty, however, comes with a price; therefore, Astell advocates action: "Were we created only for Contemplation, or were this the only business of our present State, there might be no great difference to what sort of necessary Truths we apply'd our selves. But being made for Action also" (*The Christian Religion* 294).

1.11 Performing Valor

Mary Astell's biographers celebrated her virtuous life and left the impression that she practiced what she taught. George Ballard observes:

As much of the former part of her life had been spent in writing for the propagating and improvement of learning, religion, and virtue; so the remaining part of it was chiefly employed in the practice of those religious duties, which she had so earnestly and pathetically recommended to others; and which perhaps no one was ever more sincere and devout. (315)

Ballard also notes that as Astell's health declined, "she earnestly desired that no company be permitted to come to her...purely because she would be disturbed in the last moments of her divine contemplations" (317). Until her death, Astell found in the contemplation of God and his love a temple in her mind where she had true liberty from confusion and darkness. She never meant for her search for Truth to be a solo adventure; therefore, she admonishes others that the virtuous woman, "not content to be wise and good her self alone, she endeavors to propagate Wisdom and Piety to all about her" (*Proposal* 104). She forges a path for all to take toward regaining the paradise within:

And then what a blessed World shou'd we have, shining with so many stars of Vertue! Who, not content to be happy themselves, for that's a narrowness of mind

too much beneath their God-like temper, would like the glorious Lights of Heav'n, or rather like him who made them, diffuse their benign Influences round about. Having gain'd an entrance into Paradise themselves, they wou'd both shew the way, and invite all others to partake of their felicity. (101)

True to herself and her foundation of Truth, Mary Astell left a legacy of valor and virtue that others would emulate in their own writing and in their own lives.

In her Part II of her proposal for women's education, Astell foretells what her life and work will mean to others. She advocates not just for virtue, but virtue that is elevated by a divinely illuminated mind. Her life and work reflect the virtue she cultivates for herself:

The former periods of her life having been thus occupied by literature and study, she devoted herself, toward its close, to a rigid observance of the duties and ceremonies of her religion....The bloom of her life had been consumed in abstracted pursuits, and in the acquisition of knowledge: her heart was pure and her manners blameless; her temper gentle, her spirits serene and equal, and her conversation instructive and animated. (Hays 219-20)

Just as Milton sought to live out his life in the pursuit of truth and pass on that philosophical ideal to others through his poetry and prose, Astell devotes her later life to the instruction and demonstration of the virtuous woman through her writing. She states,

One wou'd therefore almost think, that the wise disposer of all things, foreseeing how unjustly Women are denied opportunities of improvement from *without*, has therefore by way of compensation endow'd them with greater propensions to Vertue and a natural goodness of Temper *within*, which if duly manag'd, would

raise them to the most eminent pitch of heroic Vertue. (*A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* 57)

This heroic virtue alters the perception of women's ability to contribute to their culture outside of the home, their traditional and limited sphere of influence. She interprets Christ's epic gospel of love for women with virtue: "And that we may never be at a loss in our Conduct towards them [our neighbors], we are commanded to do to others, as we, supposing we judge according to Right Reason, desire to be treated our selves" (*The Christian Religion* 196). The divine spark becomes a right and reasonable belief that must be practiced and shared with others. The virtuous woman "knows that her happiness does not depend on anything outside her own mind...above all, this woman lives her life in accordance with reason" (Broad 2). Astell is a "Christian deontologist, to be sure, insofar as she holds that certain acts toward God, ourselves, and our neighbors are right or obligatory," and she is "deeply concerned with cultivating the agent's *disposition* to follow the divine law" (Broad 6-7). For Astell knows that the life of the mind is useless without a resulting virtuous action, like "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."²⁰ Once she experiences right reason for herself, "given the force of her character, it was only a small step to wanting to convince others of the validity of her perceptions" (Perry 332). Astell's influence and impact affected many women writers; women such as

Judith Drake, Lady Damaris Masham, Elizabeth Thomas, Lady Mary Chudleigh, Elizabeth Elstob, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu – those we know of – were encouraged by her book to think of women as a misunderstood and oppressed class of people. Their lives were changed by Astell's texts and by her example;

²⁰ "Though I speak with the tongues of men and Angels, and have not love, I am *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (I. Corinthians 13:1), *1599 Geneva Bible*.

she showed them how to take themselves seriously as thinkers and writers. (Perry 106)

Many times, with a satiric voice and a forceful rhetorical strategy, Astell challenges the status quo in all concerns of women, from their education to their mental and spiritual happiness. With tongue in cheek, she says of her proposals for improving the lives of women,

The Ladies, I'm sure, have no reason to dislike this Proposal, but I know not how the Men will resent it, to have their enclosure broke down, and Women invited to taste of that Tree of Knowledge they have so long unjustly monopoliz'd. (*A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* 83)

For though a woman first tasted of that tree of knowledge, women have been barred from its fruit ever since.

From the rhetorical strategies of Milton and other, like-minded philosophers, Astell cultivates what will become the feminist language of her successors. Without a Mary Astell, writers such as Lady Chudleigh and Elizabeth Carter would have had to forge their own paths to independent thought; with Astell's courageous life's work, however, she cut through the bramble to make the way clear for those who come after her. For example, "It was easier for Elizabeth Carter to live alone and write (or for Hannah More or Hester Mulso or Mary Wollstoncraft) because Mary Astell had done so" (Perry 330). For women like Lady Mary Chudleigh and Elizabeth Carter, Astell presented a fiery proposal to live with all the human nobility and dignity that their God had created in them.

**5 CHAPTER THREE – VALUE AND VIRTUE: LADY MARY CHUDLEIGH’S
LIFE SERMON**

Then shun, oh! shun that wretched state,

And all the fawning flatt’ers hate:

Value your selves, and men despise,

You must be proud, if you’ll be wise.

(Lady Mary Chudleigh, “To the Ladies”)

In her writing and in her life, Lady Mary Chudleigh, a direct recipient of Milton’s rhetoric of liberty and Mary Astell’s wise legacy, also proposes a life of contemplation, right reason, and proairesis through education for women. Of all the women in this study, Chudleigh represents the only married woman, and the one for whom the least biographical information is available. Margaret J. M. Ezell, in the introduction to her 1993 edition of Chudleigh’s work, provides the family and literary biographical details that are known. Through her mother’s side of the family, “the illustrious Sydenham family of Wynfold Eagle, Dorset,” Chudleigh had access to scientists and philosophers such as Richard Boyle and John Locke, as well as “a network of intellectually inclined relatives...who appear to have shared the engagement with issues of natural history and metaphysics, which Chudleigh displays so confidently in her own writings” (Ezell viii-xix). In fact,

Chudleigh’s circumstances from childhood through married maturity gave her the opportunity to cultivate literary acquaintances, pursue her studies of the classics, and, in the final stages, to establish a public reputation as a writer. (Ezell xxvi)

Furthermore, much like Mary Astell’s literary career, the trajectory of her writing career follows “a movement from a Restoration lyricist and satirist...to a philosophical essayist and religious

devotionalist” (xxii-xxiii). Readers may trace in Chudleigh’s work “a continuous philosophical exploration of human passions and the ways to live a truly harmonious life, at peace with one’s passions” (xxiii). Ezell’s description of Chudleigh’s path as a writer follows the path to virtue laid out by both John Milton and Mary Astell.

Much of the information we have about Chudleigh’s life comes from her own words and from those closest to her. She describes her life at Devonshire in a letter to Elizabeth Thomas, a close friend, as recorded in Richard Gwinnett’s memoirs in 1717:

You will find very little agreeable Company here, most of the Persons you will converse with, will speak a Language you will hardly understand; you will find us rough and unpolished as our Country, and I am afraid will quickly weary of living a Life so vastly different from what you have been accustomed to at *London*; but there is a Pleasure in Variety, and what you want in Conversation, you shall make up in Books. (267)

Chudleigh’s creates her own education through her love of reading and learning, like Astell and other women who desire an intellectual life. Chudleigh’s own education reflects her aspiration to become a learned and virtuous woman. Like Astell and other women of her time, Chudleigh had no formal education; she did, however, voraciously read every book accessible to her. According to Ballard, Chudleigh’s “love of books, her great industry in the reading of them, and her great capacity to improve herself by them, enabled her to make a very considerable figure among the literati of her time” (282-83). Robert Shiells agrees with Ballard’s estimation of Chudleigh’s education and abilities:

She was a lady of great virtue, as well as understanding, and she made the latter of these subservient to the promotion of the former, which was much approved by

study; but though she was enamoured of the charms of poetry, yet she dedicated some part of her time to the severer study of philosophy, as appears from her excellent essays, which discover an uncommon degree of piety, and knowledge, and a noble contempt of those vanities which the unthinking part of her sex so much regard, and so eagerly pursue. (178)

Chudleigh's "uncommon degree of piety" is the consequence of her search for truth through contemplation and right reason. Chudleigh shares with Milton and Astell an intellectual career that expands her own knowledge as well as expounds her ideas to others. Her admiration for her friend is evident in her tribute to Astell's influence on all women in "To Amystrea,"

But taught by you, she may at length improve,
 And imitate those Virtues she admires.
 Your bright Example leaves a Tract Divine,
 She sees a beamy Brightness in each Line,
 And with ambitious Warmth aspires,
 Attracted by the Glory of your Name,
 To follow you in all the lofty Roads of Fame. (21)

Chudleigh indeed follows Astell in the path to virtue and influence; she ambitiously employs the same tactics in engaging those who would keep women from an education and a seat at the table of knowledge. And like Astell, as Joan K. Kinnaird points out, Chudleigh represents the proto-feminist ideal, not that of total equality of the sexes, but "equality of 'souls' and hence, according to the philosophical understanding of the time, equality of the rational faculties God had given to men and women alike that they might achieve personal sanctity" (74). Elizabeth

Thomas writes in her ode “To the Lady Chudleigh, The Anonymous Author of the Lady’s Defense”:

See here, what Wonders *Eloquence* can do,
 When join’d with *Harmony* and *Beauty* too:
 Whilst thou in lazy Wishes pass’d the Day,
 And sigh’d ingloriously thy Time away,
 This generous Nymph in *Action* spoke her Mind,
 She *came*, she *saw*, and *gain’d* what she design’d;
 By dint of *Reason*, she your Foe *subdues*,
 See how they trembling fly, and *she alone* pursues. (148)

Like Astell, both Chudleigh and Thomas also corresponded with Robert Norris on the subjects of feminine intellectual and spiritual acumen. Thomas, who never saw Norris face to face, learned his description from Lady Chudleigh:

He is a little Man of a pale Complexion, but he has a great deal of Sweetness and good Humour in his Face, attended with an extraordinary Modesty, and a more than common Air of Humility; there seems to be a Reservedness in his Temper, but when you are acquainted with him, you will find it only the Result of Thoughtfulness. (250)

Chudleigh’s description of Norris demonstrates those traits she deems worthy: thoughtfulness, modesty, and humility. Chudleigh displays her own humility and modesty in a letter to Thomas, wherein she writes: “The *weak Defence* I have made for my *Sex*, is so far from deserving the Thanks you are pleased to give me” (247). In the same letter, Chudleigh explains a vicious reception of “The Ladies Defence” by “Men, who think they cannot be *obedient Wives*, without

being *Slaves*, nor pay their *Husbands* that *Respect* they own them, without sacrificing their *Reason* to their *Humour*” (247-48). She also illuminates the contemplative life she leads in her country home:

The greatest Part of my Time is spent in my Closet; there I meet with nothing to disturb me, nothing to render me uneasy; I find my Books and my Thoughts to be the most agreeable Companions, and had I not betime accustomed myself to their Conversation, perhaps I should have been as unhappy as any of my Sex. (252)

She describes her purpose in life, which is to “employ my leisure Hours in improving my Mind, in enlarging my Understanding, and in making some Progress in the useful parts of Learning” (253). Reading the intimate correspondence between Chudleigh and Thomas provides a clear understanding of the importance Chudleigh places on the improvement of her mind through reading and contemplation.

In addition to her private, contemplative life, Chudleigh continues the work that Astell and others begin through action and reason. She chooses the path of reason and eloquently expresses her intellectual capacity in poetry and prose. Mary Scott, another poet influenced by Chudleigh, pays tribute to Chudleigh in her poem *The Female Advocate*²¹:

Twas thine O Chudleigh (name for ever dear
Whilst wit and virtue claim the law sincere!)

²¹ Mary Scott’s poem was written in response to Mr. Duncombe’s *Feminead*. In her preface to the poem, Scott defines her intention: “Being too well acquainted with the illiberal sentiments in general in regard to our sex, and prompted by the most fervent zeal for their privileges, I took up the pen with an intention of becoming their advocate” (v). Scott then names, throughout the poem, women who have guided her and fought for the right of women’s education. She determines that men regard “the woman who suffers her faculties to rust in a state of listless indolence, with a more favourable eye, than she who engages in a dispassionate search after truth” (vi). Scott’s quest concerning the “search after truth” makes Chudleigh a natural ally.

Boldly t'assert great Nature's equal laws,
 And plead thy helpless injur'd sex's cause:
 For that, thy fame shall undecaying bloom,
 And flow'rs unfading grow around thy tomb. (14-15)

Scott identifies Chudleigh as an advocate for “injur'd sex's cause” – the call for education for women. Chudleigh's work creates another layer of foundation for women who are fighting for their rights later in the century. Scott's poem contains a footnote on Chudleigh's contribution to the cause in spite of her own limited education:

She seems to hint in some of her writings that she had not enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education; but her application to study, and great capacity, enabled her to make a considerable figure amongst her contemporary writers. She wrote many poetical pieces which were then highly approved of, and was a zealous asserter of the *female right to literature*. (14)

The best details of Chudleigh's biography may be found in what she has to say about her life and work in her letters and in other writer's comments about her. In the preface to “The Ladies Defence,” Chudleigh writes, “That what I write is wholly intended for such as are on the same Level with my self, and have not been blest with a learned and ingenious Education” (3). In the same preface, however, Chudleigh does recommend English translations of certain authors to her readers for their edification: the philosophers Seneca, Plutarch, Epictetus, Socrates; and the poets “Homer, Anacreon, Theocritus, Lucretius, Manilius, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, and Persius, are now naturaliz'd, and wear an English Dress” (5). The reference to Epictetus places Chudleigh, along with Elizabeth Carter, in a school of eighteenth-century women who use the philosopher's work to underscore their own thoughts about stoicism.

1.12 Stoicism and Forbearance

Chudleigh's engagement through the English translations of classical philosophy and literature prepares her for an erudite writing career. As a member of Mary Astell's intellectual circle, she certainly knew of the duality proposed in Descartes' *Discourse on a Method*, and her knowledge of the philosophy of Seneca, Socrates, and Epictetus means she was well versed in stoic ideology. She mentions Descartes in her preface to *The Song of the Three Children, Paraphrased*, in which she attributes her ideas of the universe to his cosmology:

In Paraphrasing that part of the Hymn which mentions the Stars, I have made use of the Cartesian Hypothesis, that the Fixt Stars are Suns, and each the Center of a Vortex; which I am willing to believe, because it gives me a noble and sublime Idea of the Universe, and makes it appear infinitely larger, fuller, more magnificent, and every way worthier of its great Artificer. (171)

Chudleigh uses Descartes' hypothesis to better worship the creator. In the preface to her essays, she refers to Epictetus and his forbearance in the face of incredible hardship as

that excellent Man, who in the worst of Times, and the most vicious Court in the World, kept his Integrity inviolable, and was still true to his Principles, and constant to himself amidst all the Inconveniencies, Discouragement and Disgraces that attended him: Neither the Indisposition of his Body, nor the Barbarity of a Savage Master, nor that Poverty in which he spent his Life, cou'd make him do or say anything unworthy of himself, or unbecoming a Philosopher. (8)

The Stoic behavior of Epictetus in the face of adversity proves that the human mind is capable of greatness in the midst of dire circumstances. Chudleigh, like Astell, separates the inner female

mind from her outer, sometimes degrading situation. According to Monica L. Dimauro, since Elizabeth Carter did not translate Epictetus' entire work until 1758, Chudleigh was limited to George Stanhope's 1694 translation of *Enchiridion* (16-17). In many passages of her work, Chudleigh draws on Epictetus for a foundation of her own ideas; indeed, Chudleigh's foundation for female liberty relies on her understanding of his core idea, or first principal. Stanhope translates this principal in the first lines of the first chapter of *Enchiridion* as,

All things whatsoever may be divided into Two Sorts; those that are, and those that are not within our own Power: Of the former sort are our Opinions and Notions of Things, Our Affections, our Desires, and our Aversions. And in short, all our Actions of every kind are in our own power. (8)

Dimauro points out that in her preface to "A Ladies Defence," Chudleigh rewords the passage from Epictetus:

In order to the gaining such a happy disposition of Mind, I would desire 'em seriously to consider what those things are which they can properly call their own, and of which Fortune cannot deprive 'em, and on these alone they ought to terminate their Desires, and not vainly extend 'em to those things which are not within their Power, as Honours, Riches, Reputation, Health, and Beauty. (3)

Chudleigh appeals to the desire of women to find an inner dignity that the slave Epictetus had found in himself, regardless of his circumstances. Dimauro asserts that

the significance is that Chudleigh recognized a method, tried and tested by this ancient philosopher, by which women might change the way they view themselves, realize their intellectual capacities and experience an inner sense of

dignity despite the way they were regarded by their male-dominated culture. (19-20)

Whereas Astell prepares Chudleigh for the life as a writer who advocates for women, Epictetus and the stoics prepare Chudleigh to embrace the compatibility of ideas she finds in Milton's work and his view of human dignity in both men and women who are created in the image of God.

1.13 Milton's Influence

From her earliest writing, Chudleigh engages Milton as an ally in her argument for intellectual equity for women and echoes those sentiments of marriage found in Milton and Astell. Chudleigh writes her first major work, "The Ladies Defence," in 1701, "in admiring emulation of Astell" (Perry, "Radical Doubt" 490), a year after Astell's first publication of *Some Reflections Upon Marriage*. Furthermore, in "The Ladies Defence," Chudleigh connects with Milton's vision of the fall in *Paradise Lost*. Both Milton's and Astell's influence may be surmised in the language and examples Chudleigh uses concerning marriage. Chudleigh writes this long poem in response to a sermon preached by John Sprint in 1699, and published later as *The Bride-woman's Counselor*, wherein Sprint preaches:

Now if the Woman owes her Being to the Comfort and Profit of Man, 'tis highly reasonable that she should be careful and diligent to content and please him, otherwise she doth wickedly pervert the End of her Creation. (6)

Both the writer of Genesis and Milton in *Paradise Lost*, however, insist that Eve "owes her Being" to God, who creates her in the same divine image and nobility as her husband, Adam. Milton defines their equal worth as human beings with Satan's first view of Adam and Eve: the adversary cries,

O Hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold,
 Into our room of bliss thus high advanced
 Creatures of another mold, earth-born perhaps,
 Not spirits, yet to Heav'nly spirits bright
 Little inferior; whom my thoughts pursue
 With wonder, and could love, so lively shines
 In them divine resemblance, and such grace

The hand that formed them on their shape hath poured. (*Paradise Lost* IV.358-65)

The Genesis writer in Chapter 1 reinforces Milton's concept of women sharing a glorious creation, made in the image of God:

26 Furthermore God said, Let us make man in our image according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heaven, and over the beasts, and over all the earth, and over everything that creepeth and moveth on the earth.

27 Thus God created the man in his image: in the image of God created he him: he created them male and female.

Moreover, the Genesis writer records that God "saw all that he had made, and lo, it was very good" (31). Sprint's narrow interpretation of Eve's creation is a traditional view, purported by a male-dominated church, of the purpose of woman's creation. Sprint continues with the traditional view of the fall:

That is, Adam was not at first deceiv'd immediately by the Serpent, but only enticed and deceived by the Woman, who was the Tempter's Agent; so as that she was both first in the Transgression, in order of Time, and also the Principal, in

contributing to the Seduction of Man; therefore 'tis but fit and just that she, who hath been so greatly instrumental of so much Mischief and Misery to Man, should be actively engage to please and comfort him. (6-7)

According to Sprint, spiritual death and confusion was not punishment enough for the fallen woman: she must forever anticipate and minister a remedy to man for the rest of human history. Woman, however, cannot dispel the spiritual death that results from disobedience to the will of God. Sprint even suggests that “before the Fall, the Will of the Husband was to have been the Woman’s Directory, as is evident from the foregoing Reason, her compliance with which had been easy and pleasant” (7). Neither the Genesis writer, nor Milton, infer that before the fall, Eve is under any direction other than the will of God, whose commandment applies to both the man and the woman. Yet, Sprint’s view is an accepted partition of blame, segregation, and inferior status of women for centuries.

Chudleigh’s character the Parson in “The Ladies Defence” is the voice of man’s traditional view and interpretation of the role of women in the fall, as well as the subservient position of the wife in marriage relationships. His is the voice of Sprint in the wedding sermon:

Unhappy Eve unto her Ruin led,
 Tempted by Pride, on the bright Poyson fed:
 Then to her thoughtless Husband gave a Part,
 He eat, seduc’d by her bewitching Art.
 And ‘twas but just that for so great a Fault
 She shou’d be to a strict Subjection brought;
 So strict, her Thoughts should be no more her own,
 But all subservient made to him alone. (9)

The Parson's record of the events of the fall contradicts the narrator in Milton's epic, who states that Adam "scrupled not to eat / Against his better knowledge, not deceived, / But fondly overcome with female charm" (*Paradise Lost* IX. 997-99); Adam is not "seduced" nor deceived by his wife. Even though Milton's narrator and the Parson in her poem are both relating the accepted version of an event, they differ in their intent. Milton's Adam, who is "fondly overcome" bears full responsibility when the Son asks him, "Was she thy God? That her thou didst obey?" (*Paradise Lost* X.145). As Chudleigh suggests in her preface *To the Reader*: "The Poets are full of Examples of this Kind, particularly Milton....Characters ought to be exactly suited to the Persons they are design'd to represent; they are the Images of the Mind, and ought to be drawn to the Life" (250). Milton's version of the event, even though it follows the scriptural order of transgression, gives full weight to the transgressions of both Adam and Eve.

Chudleigh's Parson continues to blame Eve for the subservience of women and the harsh treatment men give them. He mirrors Sprint's allegation that woman's service was easier before the fall because the man's demands became harsher after his transgression:

Had she not err'd, her Task had easie been,
 He ow'd his change of Humour to her Sin.
 But on your Mother Eve alone reflect;
 Thank her for his Moroseness and Neglect:
 Who with a fond indulgent Spouse being blest,
 And like a Mistress Courted, and Carest,
 Was not contented with her present State,
 But must her own Unhappiness create.

Melissa responds with an allusion to Eve's creation and an objection to man's opinion of woman: "Who think us Creatures for Derision made, / And the Creator with his Work upbraid" (14). The Creator's work is pronounced good in Genesis, including the creation of woman, as Melissa insists: "What he call'd Good, they proudly think not so, / And with their Malice, their Prophaneness show" (14). In *The Female Preacher*, Chudleigh cites Milton in her argument that the best creature, the woman, is created last:

Now there are some Divines that tell us, that the frame of this lower World God proceeded from the less to the more perfect; and therefore, according to them, the Woman's being created last will not be a very great Argument, to debate the Dignity of the Female Sex. If some of the Men do own this, 'tis more likely to be true: The Great *Milton*, a very Grave Author, brings in *Adam* thus speaking to *Eve*, in his *Paradise Lost*, "O fairest of Creation! Last and best / Of all God's Works." (9)

Chudleigh cites Milton's description of Eve as the "Last and best" of God's creation to prove that women are not inherently inferior to men. According to John Rogers, Chudleigh's reference to Milton's Eve is "one of the earliest citations of *Paradise Lost* that actually appears in print in the seventeenth century," and Chudleigh's "discussions of Milton's epic attempt to enlist John Milton as a proponent of feminism" (n.pag.). Moreover, Shannon Miller points out that

while the gender politics of Milton's poem are likely perceived by a twenty-first century audience as stymieing female voices, Chudleigh's innovative enactment of the poem's political and gendered possibilities allows her to inhabit a radical literary and ideological position at the end of the seventeenth century. (176)

In *The Female Preacher*, Chudleigh wryly remarks, “I never read or heard that there was a particular Original Sin imputed to the Woman, and another to the Man” (12). Chudleigh demonstrates her logic, as well as the shared responsibility for the fall:

I don't argue for our Mother Eve to defend her Transgression, but to shew the unreasonableness of the Inference from it.²² All the other Sex sprang from her as well as we, and are therefore, I think, equally guilty of her Transgression; and I would be glad to see any one strongly prove, that because we are of the same Sex, therefore that Sin is imputed to us more than the Men. (10)

Milton's Adam and Eve receive equally devastating consequences, those of spiritual death and darkness of mind, for their transgression of God's sole command. And, according to both Milton and Chudleigh, the remedy for man is the same as for woman – divine light through right reason. Chudleigh alludes to Milton's poem in many passages of her own work, both in her poetry and her essays; moreover, Chudleigh demonstrates knowledge of Milton's prose when she considers the marriage union in light of woman's intellect, for she agrees with his doctrine of marriage as first and foremost a remedy for the loneliness of solitary life. In *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton suggests that

although God in the first ordaining of marriage taught us to what end he did it, in words expressly implying the apt and cheerful conversation of man and woman, to comfort and refresh him against the evil of solitary life, not mentioning the

²² Thousands of years of Abrahamic tradition arises from the “inference” that because Eve is responsible for the downfall of humankind, all women are inherently transgressors. Chudleigh, like Milton, resists that tradition and insists that men and women are equally culpable for the fall and equally capable of wrongdoing.

purpose of generation till afterwards, as being but a secondary end in dignity,
though not of necessity. (866)

Milton reinforces this doctrine in *Paradise Lost* when Adam fears he will lose Eve's "sweet converse and love so dearly joined, / To live again in these wild woods forlorn" (IX.909-10). Chudleigh agrees that the marriage union God intended affords more than just slave labor and reproduction.

1.14 Marriage, not Slavery

Many critics have seized upon Chudleigh's description in her poems of the wife as slave as a glimpse into her own marriage; she begins "The Ladies Defence" with "Wife and Servant are the same, / But only differ in the Name" (1-2).²³ However, according to Ezell, critics have been too quick to attribute the author's work to her personal life:

It has been the practice for commentators to supplement the bare facts of
Chudleigh's life by reading the content of her poems as though they were strictly
autobiographical, confessional accounts of her personal situation. (xxii)

Ezell warns against this assumption and suggests, "Chudleigh's attacks on her generation's notions of a wife's duties and a husband's powers should be viewed in the context of Chudleigh's overall career as a writer" (xxii). In her poem, and in other works, Chudleigh simply defends women in what she sees as inequality in the marriage relationship. No evidence exists that Chudleigh's marriage was an unhappy one, or that she wrote so forcefully about the subservience of marriage from her own experience. When Chudleigh speaks of marriage, she bemoans the frivolous wife caught in the bondage of a loveless marriage and echoes Milton's

²³ Bridget Hill records several instances in which wives are "looked upon but as an upper servant." For example, Hill notes that Daniel Defoe's Roxana enters into marriage "to be, at best, but an upper servant." (146).

and Astell's concept of the ideal wife as an intellectually fit companion for her husband. In *The Female Preacher*, she writes,

Now I own 'tis true that Woman was made for the Comfort and Benefit of Man:
but I think a much nobler Comfort to have a Companion, a Person in whom a
Man may confide, to whom he can communicate his very Soul, and open his
Breast and most inward Thoughts, than to have a Slave sitting at his Footstool,
and trembling at every word that comes like Thunder and Lightning from the
Mouth of the domestick Pharaoh. (9)

In fact, when Milton's Eve returns after she has eaten the forbidden fruit, Adam says of her, not only that she was created "last and best," but also that she "excelled / Whatever can to sight or thought be formed, / Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet" (*Paradise Lost* IX.897-99). Adam's fear of losing Eve has little to do with her beauty, and more to do with her companionship: "How can I live without thee, how forego / Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined, / To live again in these wild woods forlorn" (*Paradise Lost* IX.908-10). Chudleigh's early engagement with Milton's and Astell's ideas concerning marriage demonstrates her knowledge of the broader questions addressing a woman's role in relationships, and that women are neither innately inferior, nor are they naturally less intelligent than men.

Chudleigh demonstrates her own intellectual equality in her poem "The Resolution," wherein she catalogues her knowledge of great writers who preceded and influenced her:

I've secret Joys, Delights to them unknown,
In Solitude I never am alone:
Books are the best Companions I can find,
At once they please, at once instruct the Mind. (16-20)

Among the distinguished authors of the past, Chudleigh includes Juvenal and Milton. She says, “On *Juvenal* I look with great Delight” (454), and credits his satirical influence. Immediate to her lines of admiration for Juvenal, Chudleigh names poets of her own time and country; “*Phoebus* has been propitious to this Isle, / And on our Poets still is pleased to Smile” (460-61), and one of those poets is Milton, who “was warm’d” by Phoebus’ “enliv’ning Fire” (462). Many of Chudleigh’s ideas concerning virtue may be traced through the ages and through men such as Juvenal and Milton.²⁴

Milton’s ideology permeates Chudleigh’s long poem *Song of the Three Children, Paraphras’d*. Chudleigh’s inspiration for the poem is the apocryphal portion of the book of Daniel that recounts the prayers of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego while they are in King Nebuchadnezzar’s oven. In her *Song*, Chudleigh sets forth the same theory of creation that Milton espouses in *Paradise Lost* that the universe was formed not *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, but *ex chaos*, out of existing matter. In their observations, she and Milton interpret the first Genesis account of creation contrary to accepted church tradition: “And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the waters” (1:2). From

²⁴ Chudleigh draws from Juvenal’s *Satire 10, The Vanity of Human Wishes*, wherein he states: “What I commend to you, you can give to yourself, for it is assuredly through virtue that lies the one and only road to a life of peace” (n.pag). Other writers who have imitated Juvenal’s satire are John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, who in his “Satyr Against reason and Mankind,” writes, “I own right reason, which I would obey; / That reason which distinguishes by sense / And gives us rules of good and ill from thence, / That bounds desires, with a reforming will” (99-102); later Samuel Johnson also imitates Juvenal’s satire his own poem, “The Vanity of Human Wishes,” in which he advises the supplicant to “Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind, / Obedient passions, and a will resigned” (359-60). Even though the poem is named for Juvenal’s Satire, according to Prem Nath, “the marrow and life blood of Johnson’s poem are Miltonic, “and that “some of the sentiments and lines that occur in the middle and end of *Samson Agonistes*” (69-70).

the viewpoint of the heavenly host, Milton describes the moment when the Son of God claims order from Chaos in Book VII of *Paradise Lost*:

Heav'n opened wide
 Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound
 On golden hinges moving, to let forth
 The King of Glory in his powerful Word
 And Spirit coming to create new worlds.
 On Heav'nly ground they stood, and from the shore
 They viewed the vast immeasurable abyss
 Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
 Up from the bottom turned by furious winds
 And surging waves, as mountains to assault
 Heav'n's highth, and with the center mix the pole. (205-15)

The Son of God commands the elements, "Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace...your discord end" (216-17). In Milton's description of the moment of creation, the Son establishes order from chaos in the physical world. Chudleigh echoes this sentiment in *Song of the Three Children* as the angels watch the appearance of order from chaos:

Angels themselves, whose Intellects are free
 From those dark Mists which our weak Reason cloud,
 Who things in their remotest Causes see,
 Whose knowledge like their Stations great and high,
 Above the loftiest Flights of weak Mortality,
 Astonish'd saw the rising World appear. (435-440)

Chudleigh's angels, who "are free" from "those dark Mists," retain the intellectual right reason that humanity loses in the fall. Chudleigh then describes the words of Christ as he creates the world from existing matter:

He spoke, and straight that mighty Mass was made,
Where Earth and Water, Air and Fire,
Without Distinction, Order or Design,
Did in one common *Chaos* join. (*Song* 462-67)

Chudleigh's description of the angels as audience to the spoken creation by the Son demonstrates her reliance on Milton's imagery of the universe spoken out of chaos. Her poem also specifically contains allusions to Milton's doctrine of free will.

Chudleigh's description of Adam and Eve in paradise mirrors the Miltonic philosophy of sufficiency and free will. In her *Song*, she writes,

Thrice blest that Pair, who in the Dawn of Time
Were made Possessors of that Happy Clime:
But wretched soon they lost their blissful State,
Undone by their own Folly, not their Fate. (501-504)

Adam and Eve's foolish decision and forfeiture of their Edenic state in Chudleigh's poem reinforces God's prophetic description of their culpability in Book III of *Paradise Lost*: Adam and Eve cannot accuse "Their maker, or their making, or their Fate, / As if predestination over-rul'd / Their will" (113-115). Milton's God announces his reasons for allowing human beings, who were created sufficient to stand, to fall "without least impulse or shadow of Fate" (120). And, as Chudleigh asserts,

Their Wills were free, and they had Pow'r to chuse;

The Good they knew, and might the Ill refuse:
 Felicity was theirs; and if they'd pleas'd
 The glorious Treasure had been still their own;
 They cou'd not be by Fraud, or Force disseiz'd:
 Their Loss was owing to themselves alone:
 Their Disobedience to the Law Divine. (*Song* 1024-30)

Adam and Eve enjoy “felicity,” a state of bliss and a state of intellectual clarity; however, through a “vain Desire of knowing more,” they made their “wretched Off-spring poor” (995, 997). The progeny of the first human beings inherit the spiritual darkness caused by Adam and Eve’s desire for the knowledge of evil as well as good.

Like Milton, Chudleigh understands the consequences of disobedience fall, not only on humankind, but on nature as well. When Eve first eats the forbidden fruit, “Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat / Sighing through all her Works gave signs of woe, / That all was lost” (*Paradise Lost* IX.782-84). Then, when Adam freely chooses to complete the original sin, “Earth trembl'd from her entrails, as again / In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan” (*Paradise Lost* IX. 1000-1001). In her *Song*, Chudleigh writes,

See! O thou holy Mourner! See!
 Commiserating Nature joins with thee!
 The trembling Earth resounds thy Moans,
 And answer ev'ry Sigh with loud redoubl'd Groans. (1111-14)

In Chudleigh’s poem, just as in Milton’s epic, nature suffers the wounds of the original sin along with Adam and Eve; furthermore, in both works, the earth resumes a portion of its chaos, and the mind of the human being darkens to divine truth.

Both Milton and Chudleigh view the son of God as remedy for the fall. Milton's character, the Son, takes the punishment of death upon himself in *Paradise Lost*. The Son says,

Behold me then, me for him, life for life
 I offer, on me let thine anger fall;
 Account me man; I for his sake will leave
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
 Freely put off, and for him lastly dye
 Well pleas'd, on me let Death wreck all his rage. (III. 236-41)

After the Son freely makes his sacrificial offer from the heart of his "filial love" and love for humankind,

His words here ended, but his meek aspect
 Silent yet spake, and breath'd immortal love
 To mortal men, above which only shone
 Filial obedience: as a sacrifice
 Glad to be offer'd, he attends the will
 Of his great Father. (III. 266-71)

In Chudleigh's *Song*, she personifies the Christ as "Love," who "look'd with Pity on their lost Estate, / And strove to mitigate their ri'grous Fate" (1036-37). Love "put on Flesh, and the Guilty dy'd: Offer'd it self in Sacrifice for All, / And did a willing Victim fall" (1042-44). Love, like the Son, freely chooses to sacrifice himself for all humanity, and "with Ease he breaks Death's adamantine Chain" (1167). The "adamantine Chain" Chudleigh describes alludes to the chains that hold Satan to the depths of Hell and represents utter despair in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, wherein Satan and his cohort are

Hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky
 With hideous ruin and combustion down
 To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
 In adamant chains and penal fire. (45-48)

The unbreakable chains of hell that bind the fallen angels also bind the human mind unless the divine intervenes. Chudleigh further personifies the Saviour as Love who restores human nobility:

O Love, thou sweetest Passion of the Mind,
 Thou gentlest Calmer of the Storms within,
 Where didst thou ever find,
 A kinder welcome, a more noble Seat,
 Than in his Breast. (1959-62)

The saviour, who is able to calm outward storms, may also calm the "Storms within."²⁵ Furthermore, she asserts that the Spirit of Truth, whom Jesus restores Milton's *Paradise Regained*, visits those who prepare their minds:

Now he his Gifts in secret does convey;
 On Minds prepar'd, like Morning Dews they fall:
 Thro' unresisting Air they make their silent Way
 And unobserv'd, Admittance gain. (1995-98)

²⁵ Here Chudleigh alludes to the miracle in Luke 8:23-24: "And as they sailed, he fell asleep, and there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. Then they went to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and the waves of water: and they ceased, and it was calm."

Following the path to virtue set out by Milton and Astell, Chudleigh prepares her mind through contemplation for the spirit of truth.

Chudleigh further aligns herself with Milton and Astell in her proposed remedy for the ruin of the fall through education, contemplation, and right reason. In “The Ladies Defence,” she addresses the woeful lack of education available to her sex. In her Preface to the Reader, Chudleigh expresses her wish that women were “as much admir’d for the Comprehensiveness of their Knowledge, as they are now despis’d for their Ignorance, and have Souls as beauteous as their faces” (3). In “To All Ingenious Ladies,” she asserts her purpose for writing the poem as “the Love of Truth, the tender Regard I have for your Honour, joyn’d with a just Indignation to see you so unworthily us’d” (2). Women’s lack of knowledge and education denies them a life of respect from each other and from men, as Chudleigh’s female character Melissa bemoans:

’Tis hard she should be by the Men despised,
 Yet kept from knowing wou’d make us priz’d:
 Debarr’d from Knowledge, banish’d from the Schools,
 And with the utmost Industry bred Fools. (14)

Chudleigh not only admonishes the men for barring women from an education, she also addresses the deficiencies she sees in other women: “I heartily wish my Sex wou’d keep a stricter Guard over their Passions” (2) and warns them that “Tranquility of Mind is not attainable without much Study, and the closest Application of Thought; it must be the work of Time, and the Effect of a daily practice” (2). In her prescription for peace of mind, Chudleigh mirrors Milton’s and Astell’s practice of daily attention to both intellectual and spiritual improvement.

1.15 Contemplation

Like Milton and Astell, Chudleigh's answer to a lack of comprehension lies in a life of study and contemplation. Melissa advises women to "only Study to be Good and Wise" (15); furthermore, in order to achieve a knowledgeable and more virtuous character, women must "Inspect themselves, and every Blemish find, / Search all the close Recesses of the Mind" (15). Melissa additionally identifies "those unseen Empires" in the mind, where we "to our Reason private Homage pay" (18). In the preface to her essays, Chudleigh writes

that the Pleasures of the Mind are infinitely preferable to those of Sense, intellectual Delights, the Joys of Thought, and Complacencies arising from a bright and enlarg'd Understanding, transcendently greater and more satisfactory than those of the Body. (*Preface to the Reader* 246)

Moreover, she explains that "rational instructive thoughts" displace "those troublesome Reflexions which generally proceed from narrow groveling Souls" (*Preface to the Reader* 246). The inferiority of her sex, the "groveling" narrowness and baseness of vain reflections, finds a cure in contemplation of a better, internal light. Those who have

had a Taste of these Delights, a pleasing Relish of these internal Joys, have always been blest with an inward Satisfaction, an inexpressible Felicity; their Minds have been calm, easy, and intrepid, amidst the greatest Storms, the most deafening Hurricanes of Life. (246)

Chudleigh displays her stoicism in the image of the contemplative mind achieving an inner peace in the storms of life.

In her essay "To Knowledge," Chudleigh expounds on the significance of contemplating heavenly objects and the divine nature. Her descriptive narration of the process of contemplation

and the rewards of divine knowledge echoes those proposals for a contemplative path set forth by Milton and Astell. She implores her reader, “Let us endeavor to improve those Faculties our kind Creator has given us, awaken our Understanding, and employ it about Subjects worthy of it” (254). To awaken the mind, she asserts

Would we but for some time withdraw our Eyes from outward Objects, and turn them inward, reflect seriously on our selves, pry into the secret Labyrinths, the shady, the obscure Recesses of our Souls, we should there find the Embrio’s of Science, the first Rudiments of Virtue, the Beginnings of all useful Knowledge; and should hear the soft and gentle Whispers of Truth, which to every attentive List’ner, every humble Enquirer, will prove a happy Guide, a kind Director; and upon a nice Scrutiny, and Review, should find a Stock of our own sufficient to begin with, which, if well managed, will not fail of yielding us plentiful Returns.
(255)

Chudleigh considers outward distractions, the ornamental trappings of life, as a hindrance from the pursuit of truth and virtue. The “happy Guide” and “kind Director” represents the divine illumination found in the temple of the mind from God himself. She suggests that women “be industriously striving to make such Things ours, as will prove real Accomplishments to our Minds, true and lasting Ornaments to our Souls” (256), and that

such are the Knowledge of God, and our Selves: These are large and comprehensive Subjects: The First takes in the whole Creation, the full extent of Being; and by contemplating the Effects, we shall rise to the Cause, and as by considering that wonderful, that amazing Power, that inimitable Wisdom, that admirable Beauty, that transporting Harmony, and that immutable Order, which at

first discover'd themselves in the formation of the Universe, and are still everywhere visible in it, we shall be led to their Divine Original, to the unexhausted Source, the Foundation of all Perfections. (*Preface to the Reader* 256)

Chudleigh shares Milton's and Astell's view of comprehension that occurs within the human mind, unaided by outward stimuli other than the glory of the creation, and fueled by a divine spark that connects a human being to his or her creator. Remarkably, Lady Chudleigh, from the seclusion of her country home, was able to transport her mind to the reaches of the universe through the power of contemplation.

For Chudleigh, the contemplation of creation leads to the understanding of the nature of God. Her vision goes beyond contemplation of created things to the

Consideration of those Divine Attributes which conspicuously shine in the visible Creation, we may ascend to the Metaphysics, which is the Noblest, the most elevated Part of Science, that on which all the rest depend; it raises us above sensible Objects, advances us to Things purely Intellectual, and treats of Being, as abstracted from Matter: 'Twill perfect our Knowledge, and brighten our Reason; enable us to proceed in our researches after Truth, on steady and unerring Principles, and give us clearer and more distinct views of the adorable Excellencies of Divine Nature. (*Preface to the Reader* 257)

Like Milton and Astell, Chudleigh believes the search for Truth lies along the path of contemplation to reason. That right reason may also redeem that part of human nobility lost in the fall.

According to Chudleigh, contemplation and revelation are useless without action. She advises that we add morality to knowledge and focus as well on the Holy Scriptures for guidance, specifically the Sermon on the Mount and its prescription for a blessed life:

To these let us joyn Moral Philosophy: That will in some measure teach us what we owe to God and our selves, will inform us how we reduce our Knowledge into Practice, and live those Truths we have been learning: but these things we shall be best taught from the Sacred Volumes; our Blessed Saviour has exalted Ethicks to the sublimest height, and his admirable Sermon on the Mount, is the noblest, the exactest Model of Perfection. (*Preface to the Reader* 257-58)

Even though Chudleigh relies on former philosophers and writers for clarification of ideas concerning contemplation and the divine illumination that result in right reason, she ultimately relies on the truths found in Christ for the way she chooses to live.

In many of her other essays, Chudleigh reiterates the contemplation of God's glory as the key to inner happiness and virtue. To better comprehend the divine nature, she asks God to prepare her mind for contemplation in "Of Pride,"

O that thou wouds't be pleased to purifie and brighten my Imagination, make it strong and regular, fit to contemplate thy Divine Essence, and form becoming Ideas of thy adorable Attributes. (267)

Calling upon that contemplation of Divine wonder in "Of Solitude," she writes:

Still upward soar, until the Mind
Effects do's in their Causes find,
And them pursue till they unite
In the bless'd Source of Truth and Light. (102-105)

She calls on her readers to “retire to our selves, and there curiously and attentively inspect the various Operations of our Souls,” wherein we “consult our Reason” and the “inimitable Stroaks of Divine Wisdom, which are visible in our Faculties, and those Participants of infinite Power, which are discoverable in our Wills” (386). Chudleigh further suggests that within us lies the divine infinite power, and “without us there is nothing but will be a fit Subject for our Contemplation” (386), intimating the presence of divine power in the temple of the mind that proves our reason and improves our will. She prays that in her solitude, “retired from the View of others,” that her mind be employed in “contemplating thy Works” and “making fresh Discoveries of thy wonderful Wisdom” (386). In the mind’s temple, the imposition and degradation of feminine inferiority disappears, and the power to live a virtuous and happy life arises. Furthermore, when we

look beyond the narrow Confines of this Globe, we shall be pleasingly confounded with a charming Variety of Objects, be lost in a delightful Maze, shall stray from one Wonder to another, and always find something new, something great, something surprisingly admirable, and every way worthy of that infinite, that incomprehensible Wisdom, to whom they owe their Original. (387)

Chudleigh’s mind is released from temporal confines, and she experiences a wondering and a wandering through a celestial *maze*, the antithesis of Milton’s fallen angels in hell in “wandr’ing mazes lost,” in which they argue “vain wisdom all, and false philosophy” (*Paradise Lost* II.561, 565). In moments of solitude, Chudleigh expands her understanding to include the wisdom of God, who is the object of her quiet reflection.

In her contemplative moments, Chudleigh transcends the trappings of her culture and even her gender. For in the contemplative state, she reflects the nobility and glory with which all humans were created before the confusion of spiritual darkness clouds right reason. She states,

When I am retired from the view of others, and only visible to thy Divine Majesty and my self, let my Thoughts be still employ'd in bettering my own Mind, or in contemplating thy Works, busy'd in praising, admiring and loving Thee, in making fresh Discoveries of thy wonderful Wisdom, of that amazing stupendous Skill, which may every where be observ'd throughout the whole Creation, till thou are please'd to call me to my Grave, where, while my Body lies, O let my Soul, wash'd clean in the pure Streams of her dear suffering Saviour's Blood, ascend to that bless'd Place, where happy Ghosts possess uninterrupted Joys. ("Of Solitude" 389)

Chudleigh determines to use her time, not in frivolous, temporal pursuits, but in the contemplation of God's nature and works. In contemplative moments, she realizes her true intellectual liberty in spite of her cultural status.

Chudleigh continues her theme of the contemplation of creation and the liberty of a noble mind in *Song of the Three Children, Paraphras'd*. Bronwen Price asserts that the "poem acts as a climax to Chudleigh's work...incorporating many of its central themes, such as the necessity to be governed by an inward Principle...and genuine pleasure resting only in 'constant Contemplation of the Divine Nature'" (198). Here the poet finds her finest freedom of expression concerning the significance of understanding as a means of deliverance. Together with freedom of will, the three children of God need no outward circumstance to find delight. They sing,

Such Joys as here from Contemplation spring;

That best, that noblest Pleasure of the Mind,
 Which keeps the Soul upon the Wing,
 And will not be to any Place confin'd:
 But range at large, as unrestrain'd as Thought or Wind. (771-775)

These lines echo Milton's narrator in *Il Penseroso*, who calls upon "Him that yon soars on golden wing, / Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne, / The Cherub Contemplation" (52-54).²⁶ They also recall Chudleigh's reliance on Epictetus, who found joy even in the worst circumstances.

For Chudleigh, the contemplation of the diving brings

Joys known but to a thoughtful Mind,
 Which can within true Satisfaction find;
 And needs no Foreign Help to make it blest,
 But all-sufficient in its self can rest. (861-64)

Chudleigh refers to the satisfaction of a rest beyond temporal circumstances; she also alludes to Milton's concept of sufficiency, which Raphael explains in Book VIII of *Paradise Lost*:

Stand fast; to stand or fall
 Free in thine own abitrament it lies.
 Perfect within, no outward aid require;
 And all temptation to transgress repel. (640-43)

²⁶ The Cherubim guarded Eden with flames after the expulsion of Adam and Eve. Additionally, two Cherubim flank the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant. Chudeigh, as well as Milton, may also be alluding to David's prayer of thanksgiving after he was delivered from Saul; David says of God, "He bowed the heavens also, and came down, and darkness *was* under his feet. And he rode upon Cherub and did fly, and he was seen upon the wings of the wind. (II Samuel 22: 10-11)

For Chudleigh, the satisfactory rest restores the prelapsarian state of mind that contains the temple wherein divine illumination resides. As Milton records the state of the human mind, endowed with right reason before the fall, “Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall,” (*Paradise Lost* III. 99), so Chudleigh imagines a mind “From all those Steams, those darkning Vapors freed, / Which from Excess proceed” (1649-50). Freedom from folly and excess creates the intellectual liberty that dispels the darkness of the fallen mind.

Chudleigh suggests that all humanity shares the same consequences and remedies for the fall. She identifies all of humanity as “We, the curst Off-spring of that wandring Race,” who must “live Probationers for Joy” (*Song* 627). Price suggests that “what is most striking is the way in which Adam and Eve are never named or treated separately,” and Eve, who is “so commonly viewed as the locus and bequeather of female deficiency throughout the early modern period is never identified through gender differentiation and never singled out for blame in Chudleigh’s poem” (206-207). Chudleigh, like Milton, holds both men and women individually and corporally responsible for their own sins.

1.16 Reason and Choice

Chudleigh’s reflective life and work lead to the liberty of making virtuous choices through right reason. In her preface to “The Ladies Defence,” she admonishes her readers: “We ought on all Occasions, to do what becomes us, to have a Regard of the Dignity of our Nature, and the Rules of right Reason” (249). Chudleigh admonishes the proud person’s dependence on the light of God to overcome the shadowy existence of the darkened mind:

His being, and all he falsely calls his own, depends on God, as the Light does on the Sun; and should he withdraw the Irradiations of his infinite Goodness, withhold his Divine Influence but for one single Now, he would necessarily and

immediately sink into his first Nothing; and, who, as he has a precarious Being, so he has a short and limited Prospect, is condemn'd to Plato's Cave, sees nothing but Shadows, takes Phantoms for Realities, and empty Sounds, reverberated Echoes for rational Discourses. (266)

The contemplative study of God's glory banishes "those thick Mists in which he's envelop'd, from everything that obscures his View, retards his Flight, and keeps him from ascending to the Region of the Spirits, the intellectual World, the bright field of Truth and Light" ("Of Pride" 266). Like Milton, who invokes divine illumination at the beginning of his epic, "what in me is dark / Illumine, what is low raise in support" (*Paradise Lost* I.22-23), Chudleigh asks God to shed "some Rays of thy Divine Splendour into my soul, illuminate my Understanding" ("Of Pride" 266). The virtuous life, attained through study and contemplation,

will enable us to pass right Judgments on Things, show us the vast Difference there is between Opinion and Reason, give us a wonderful Strength and Liberty of Mind, a Vivacity and Clearness of Thought, and keep us continually on our Guard. ("Of Knowledge" 256)

In the liberty she finds in contemplation, Chudleigh delights in the ability to comprehend the difference between reason and folly, and to make her own choices as a woman who possesses a rational mind.

Even though Chudleigh looks forward to the release of the restraints of life and of the time when she will know all truth in the presence of God, she asserts that we may know a part of that spirit of truth in this life. She writes in the preface to her *Song*,

In the mean time, it becomes us with profound humility and an entire Submission to acquiesce in, and yield a full assent to all those Divine Truths which the infinitely Wise God has vouchsaf'd to reveal to us. (172)

Chudleigh adds the blessings of a life lived “by endeavoring to gain a generous Liberty of Mind, a large and universal Spirit, a Soul free from Prejudices, and a meek and teachable Temper” (172). Her strength and virtue are within her, and just as the original human beings were “thrice blest” in Eden,

Thrice blest are they who're with interior Graces crowned,
Whose Minds with Rational Delights abound,
With Pleasures more delicious, more refin'd,

Than the voluptuous can in their Enjoyments find. (*Song* 1602-5)

Through her description of the blessed life, Chudleigh entreats others to reach for a life of the mind. All of her contemplation and study points to a life of virtue, born of the divine light within, and sent as a beacon for other women.

1.17 Performing Valor

Chudleigh laments the station of women who are ignorant of their intellectual potential and who are reluctant to dismiss the follies of life. She writes that they are

More pleas'd to wander in the dusky Shades of Night
.....
They but like fleeting Phantoms show,
And nor themselves, nor others know;
In Ignorance immers'd, and pleas'd with being so. (“Of Pride” 285)

She imagines the angels, who are in the presence of God's divine light, looking down with pity on the spiritual darkness and confusion of human beings:

Methinks I see those bright Intelligences, those exalted Understandings, who by the dignity of their Nature, are raised to sublime Stations, to the most intimate Union that created Minds can have with the Supreme Good, view us with a scornful Smile, but with a Scorn that is mix'd with Pity. It moves them to Compassion to see poor wretched Mortals chusing Servitude, and hugging Chains...boasting of Sight, yet stumbling on, and tumbling headlong down from Precipice to Precipice, till they are lost in a retrieveless Depth; they, and their vain Designs for ever in endless Night. ("Of Pride" 264)

Fallen human beings, lacking in right reason, move like Satan's flight through Chaos, where in a "vast vacuity: all unawares / Fluttering his pennons vain plumb down he drops / Ten thousand fathom deep" (*Paradise Lost* II. 932-34). Chudleigh's virtue acts as a light for those who would reject servitude in exchange for a life of liberty.

Reaching other women who are trapped in the hold of intellectual darkness becomes Chudleigh's life sermon. Of her work, she claims in the preface to *Song of the Three Children*, *Paraphras'd*, her final and best poem,

I writ 'em with no other design than that of exercising and enlarging my Thoughts, and, of heightening and refining those Ideas which I had already fram'd, of the Infinite Goodness, Wisdom, and Power of God, to whose Service I think my self oblig'd to devote my Time, my Faculties, and all that small Stock of Understanding which it has please'd his Divine Goodness to bestow upon me.
(172)

Chudleigh's possession of right reason through the freedom in her mind affords her a new definition of virtue for women. She tells us, "Desire no Gain, but what from Virtue springs / Nor wish for any higher Praise, than what she brings" (1748-49). Adopting the theological remedy of spiritual darkness from Milton and mirroring the successful redefinition of virtue voiced by her predecessor, Mary Astell, Chudleigh desires to leave a legacy of liberty for other women. She asserts that "'tis not probable that Faculties so bright as ours, were given us to be conceal'd," but that they "were to be the Objects of Esteem, to attract Respect and Veneration, by which their Influence might become more prevalent, and they thereby render'd capable of being universal Blessings" ("Of Solitude" 385). Chudleigh earns the "respect and veneration" of her successors for her fearless and virtuous defense of women.

Early in Chudleigh's career, she responds to the voice of the Parson in "The Ladies Defence," who sets out a "proper" avocation for women – submission to the guidance and will of others. He says that he is divinely inspired to tell all women to "Give up their Reason, and their Wills resign, / And every Look, and every Thought confine" (9). Chudleigh, however, refuses to bend her reason and her will to anyone but her God. Moreover, she hopes that other women find in her work the power "to cultivate their Minds, to brighten and refine their Reason, and she suggests that truth is a treasure worth finding, and "valuable though she appears in a plain Dress" (*To the Reader* 247). She asserts that a "greater Delight, a more transporting Satisfaction, results from a pure well-regulated Soul, from a Consciousness of having done Things agreeable to Reason" (*To the Reader* 248). She earnestly sets out her heart's desire for others:

I wish I could persuade all, at least the greatest part of my Sex, those whose Circumstances do not necessarily oblige them to lower Cares, to enter their Claims, and not permit the Men any longer to monopolize the Perfections of the

Mind, to ingross the Goods of the Understanding: I would not have them suffer themselves to be willingly dispossess'd of their Reason, and shut out of the Commonwealth of Learning. ("Of Knowledge" 251)

Chudleigh yearns to impart the solace she finds in the spirit of truth to those who would pursue knowledge and understanding as the path to a new virtue for women. She embodies the pure in heart and virtuous woman that she purports others to become.

Her reputation as a virtuous woman and an intellectual writer indeed inspires others. Elizabeth Thomas writes in "On the Death of the Lady Chudleigh, an Ode, "Her sweet *Address*, the *Muse* inspir'd, / Her pious *Life* by all admir'd, / My *Heart* with constant *Emulation* fir'd" (275). Thomas concludes the poem, "*She* good did chuse, / And bad refuse, / A *bright Example* to succeeding Times" (280). Chudleigh sets out the legacy she desires to leave for women who follow her:

Such as had exalted Understandings, were not to live wholly to themselves, to shine in private, but to be Guides to those of less elevated Sense; the Ignorant, the Novices in Knowledge, to be Scholars to the Masters of Reason; such as had learn'd only the Elements, the first Rudiments of Virtue, were to be instructed both by the Precepts and Examples of such as had made it their love and Constant Practice. ("Of Solitude" 385)

Chudleigh's "bright example," her reputation and what she describes as her rudimentary work, creates a conversation for future feminine discourse in writers such as Elizabeth Carter, who will take her admonition to heart and become England's reigning woman scholar.

6 CHAPTER FOUR – ELIZABETH CARTER: REDEEMING FEMININE VALOR

“Be strong, live happy, and love.” (*Paradise Lost* 8.633)

All of Milton’s visions of what a scholar and a poet should be are to be found in the life and work of Elizabeth Carter. In his work of the seventeenth century, Milton put forth an almost impossibly high standard for scholarship and piety, a combination of education, subordination of the will, and what the poet called right reason. This unique combination may only be found in individuals who are thoroughly devoted to a life of studious contemplation and virtuous behavior. Of course Milton prescribed these virtues with men in mind, and few men could have accomplished such a stringent way of life to Milton’s satisfaction. Amazingly, all of Milton’s requirements for right reason as the path to virtue are realized in the poet Elizabeth Carter, high praise indeed for an eighteenth-century daughter of Eve.

Carter’s pursuit of knowledge certainly mirrors Milton’s own diligence as a scholar. In fact, she meets and exceeds his expectations both in the knowledge she acquires and in her reasons for acquiring that knowledge. According to Priscilla Dorr, Samuel Johnson “declared her to be the best Greek scholar in England” (138). Carter did not earn this praise easily: Reginald Martin notes that her father “thought his daughter at first to be such a poor scholar that he urged her to drop her languages and pursue other interests” (49). Eventually, however, Carter’s desire for knowledge overcame her limitations, and she succeeded with the help of her progressive parent. From her father, Carter learned the ancient languages of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; she subsequently taught herself French, Italian, Spanish, German, Portuguese, and Arabic in her long nights of arduous study. Carter’s nephew, Montagu Pennington, notes that

It is very remarkable that, though her infancy and early youth afforded no promise of her future attainments, and that she gained the rudiments of knowledge with

great labour and difficulty, it was even her most earnest desire to become learned...for without a willing mind, and a happy facility of talent, in addition to the most unceasing industry, it is not possible to conceive how this accomplished female could have obtained the mastery of so many languages. (29)

The Rev. Thomas Timpson makes the poignant observation that “being mortified and sorrowful at her own dullness and difficulties, she resolved on persevering, and her diligence was crowned with surprising success, so that she became profoundly learned” (148). In her devotion to learning, Carter answers the call of Milton in *Reason of Church Government*, wherein he insists: “For there is not that thing in the world of more grave and urgent importance throughout the whole life of man than is discipline” (751). Carter’s discipline, however, would have come to nothing without the full support of her father, for she was born under the same adversity as her predecessors, Mary Astell and Lady Mary Chudleigh. As an eighteenth-century woman, without her father’s consent and participation, she would not have been allowed a comprehensive education.

In both her correspondence and her poetry, Carter expresses gratitude for her father’s attention to her intellectual development. She writes in Latin to Thomas Birch on 22 August 1738 of her grateful adoration of Dr. Carter:

If I have any natural gift, it is right that it should be attributed to God Almighty (from whom cometh every good gift). If, on the contrary, I seem to have improved this gift in any way, the credit for it is due to the care and attention of my most loving father, who, when I was still a child, fearful of the difficulty and novelty of the task, led me by examples and encouragement to the study of the

humanities, and supported me until such time as I should be able to swim by myself without assistance” (rpt. in Gwen Hampshire 50).

Her desire to become proficient in languages, aided by the devotion of her loving parent, afforded Carter with an admirable life, as Norma Clarke suggests: “Knowing Greek, and being known to know Greek as comprehensively as she did, was in many way the bedrock of Elizabeth Carter’s independent life. No man could condescend to her” (27). In addition to her knowledge of languages, Carter credits Dr. Carter for her knowledge of science and philosophy and for her attraction to wisdom and virtue:

Thy Hand my infant Mind to Science form’d,
 And gently led it thro’ the thorny Road:
 With Love of Wisdom, and of Virtue warm’d,
 And turn’d, from idle Toys, to real Good. (5-8)

She further acknowledges his direction in turning her mind to reason:

Whate’er the tuneful muse, or pensive sage
 To fancy warbled, or to reason show’d,
 The treasur’d stores of each enlighten’d age,
 My studious search to thy direction ow’d. (13-16)

Dr. Carter’s direction of his daughter’s studies included the deep consideration of spiritual matters and theological debates; he allows her the liberty to exceed the limitations placed on women of her time and engage in deep philosophical concerns as an independent and equal scholar. As Clarke points out,

Her father, the Rev. Nicholas Carter, was proud of her and an avid scholar himself...she had a determination to be a scholar, the will power to persevere and

a maturity of judgment and seriousness of purpose that impressed all who knew her. (33)

As an independent thinker, Carter was able to look to her God as her inspiration instead of merely relying on the knowledge of other men. She writes that her father

But bid my independent spirit soar,
 In all the freedom of unfetter'd thought. (19-20)
 But fixt my duties by the sacred law,
 That rules the secret movements of the heart. (23-24)

Carter's confidence in her beliefs became an integral part of her career as a writer and as a public figure. She understood, "as a devout Christian, her life on earth as a preparation for eternal life," and that no one else "could answer for her when she stood before God on Judgment Day" (Clarke 35). Carter credits her father who gave her the "Blest Law of Liberty! With gentle lead / To regulate our erring nature giv'n" (25-26). In this autonomy, Carter satisfies Milton's requirement in *Areopagitica* that each person must answer for his or her own beliefs: "A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believes things only because his pastor says so or the Assembly so determines, without knowing any other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy" (952). Carter's acceptance of responsibility for her own search for truth puts her on the path of virtue.

Carter returns the respect and honor her father pays her when his livelihood is threatened by his own independent thinking. When the clergyman is "persecuted for obeying the dictates of his conscience in refusing to read the Athanasian Creed" (Pennington 30), Carter comes to her father's defense in an articulate letter to Rev. Mr. Randolph, in which she writes, "the design of this address is to ask the favour of you first to instruct me to understand the Athanasian Creed

consistently with the principles of reason; how it is to be reconciled with all those passages in the New Testament” (rpt. in Pennington 31). In Dr. Carter’s 1752 sermon, he states that “the Christian religion is to be learned, in a strict sense, from the Holy Scriptures only” (6), and that “great care was taken to put a just difference between the doctrines of Christ, and the opinions of men” (12). With his insistence on *sola scriptura*, Dr. Carter’s influence on his daughter brings her thinking into accord with that of Milton in matters of spiritual autonomy and responsibility. Her willingness to take on the religious establishment in a debate on severe theological matters also mirrors the boldness with which Milton takes on the church in his day. Carter’s boldness, however, is more remarkable because she is a woman. Whereas Astell and Chudleigh focus on the education of women as a necessary prerequisite for virtue, Carter’s education provides her with the confidence to take on other men on behalf of her father’s reputation. In her defense of her father’s right to question tradition, Carter resembles Milton’s willingness to stand up to religious authorities in theological debates.

For all her secular knowledge, Carter viewed her study of scripture to be paramount to her virtue. Accordingly, as Thomas Timpson notes,²⁷

Among her studies, there was one which she never neglected; one which was always dear to her, from her earliest in fancy to the latest period of her life, and in which she made a continual improvement. This was that religion which was her constant care and greatest delight. Her acquaintance with the Bible, some part of which she never failed to read every day, was as complete, as her belief in it was sincere. Her piety was constant, fervent, but not enthusiastical: she never thanked

²⁷ Carter’s biographers were eager to represent her as pious as a way of softening her reputation as a learned woman. Carter’s own study and knowledge of scripture, however, speaks to her piety and virtue.

God, like the proud Pharisee, that she was not like others; but rather, like the publican, besought him to be merciful to her a sinner. (151-52)

Carter's reputation for piety was well-earned by her fervent study of her faith. She was quick to insert her opinion, humbly, on behalf of what she believed to be the truth. In "Reflections of Mrs. Carter, on Making Her Will," she again credits her beloved father for her intelligence, for her freedom, and for her love of God:

Next to God, the supreme and original Author of all happiness, I desire to express my thankfulness to those whom he has made the instruments of conveying his benefits to me. Most particularly I am indebted to my father, for his kindness and indulgence to me in every instance, and especially in the uncommon care and pains he has taken in my education, which has been the source of such a variety of reasonable pleasures, as well as of very great advantages in my conversation with the world. (reprinted in Timpson 152)

Armed with a remarkable education and a sound spiritual heritage, Carter takes on the world and becomes one of England's most revered scholars. In her autobiographical poem, "In Diem Natalem," Carter prays,

Since thou my undistinguish'd Frame survey'd
 Among the lifeless Heaps of Matter laid.
 Thy Skill my elemental Clay refin'd,
 The straggl'ing Parts in beauteous Order join'd,
 With perfect Symmetry compos'd the whole,
 And stamp't thy sacred Image on my Soul. (7-12)

Her allusion to “heaps of matter” and the composition of order from chaos mirrors Milton’s concept of creation of the universe, “the loud misrule / Of Chaos far remov’d, least fierce extremes / Contiguous might distemper the whole frame” (*Paradise Lost* 7.271-73) and emphasizes her close reading of Milton’s epic.²⁸ Her “perfect Symmetry” and the stamp of God’s image reflects Milton’s Adam and Eve, who “worthy seemed, for in their looks Divine / The image of their glorious Maker shone, / Truth, wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure” (*Paradise Lost* 4.291-93). From her birth, Carter acknowledges her worth through her Creator, and her purpose in the pursuit of truth and wisdom.

1.18 The Question of Marriage

Before Carter can become England’s female phenomena of intellect and piety, she must settle for herself how she will live. Carter’s search for autonomy extends to her position on matrimony. Furthermore, Dr. Carter’s forbearance extended to his daughter’s views on marriage. In what was probably the most important decision for a woman of her time, Carter had her father’s full support. Dr. Carter’s letters to his daughter “all emphasized that she was to judge and make appropriate decisions on matters large and small” (Clarke 34). For example, Dr. Carter

²⁸ Carter’s representation of harmony from chaos also resembles Dryden’s “An Ode for St. Cecilia’s Day, 1699.” In the poem, Dryden creates an image of St. Cecilia’s music bringing nature to life and harmony to the heavenly choir:

When Nature underneath a heap
 Of jarring atoms lay,
 And could not heave her head,
 The tuneful voice was heard from high,
 Arise ye more than dead. (3-7)

wrote to her concerning a potential beau on April 16, 1739: “My meaning in all this, is to leave you to your own Liberty” (rpt. in Hampshire 23-24). As Myra Reynolds points out, “She was allowed to determine the momentous question of marriage entirely according to her own inclinations” (256). Reverend Carter, in an unprecedented gesture, trusted his daughter to make her own decision regarding a marriage proposal. Reynolds further notes that Carter lived a completely satisfying life as a single woman, who “did not covet other women’s lovers or husbands or children or homes” (256). As a matter of individual choice, Carter determines her freedom deliberately and emphatically, for “though an advocate of self-regulation, she did not think she would be able to regulate herself into the disciplines of married life” (Clarke 38). Even though Carter’s father did not insist on her marrying nor interfere in her personal life, like Astell and Chudleigh, she held strong opinions on the treatment of other women who were in oppressive unions. Though a “conservative with a deep adherence to the status quo, she was openly dissatisfied with the treatment of women in general and intellectual women in particular” (Clarke 28). Carter acts as a model for women who had the good fortune and support to live in complete intellectual liberty. For example, in her poem “A Dialogue,” the speaker or Mind triumphs over the Body who is trapped in domestic drudgery.

1.19 Stoicism and Epictetus

As a scholar, Carter’s interests surpassed languages and religion, for she delved into the world of science and philosophy: “She studied ancient geography and mathematics, religion and history, and developed a passion for astronomy” (Clarke 35). Her knowledge of the greater world allowed Carter to live independently with rare confidence, a luxury for her as a woman. She demonstrates her knowledge of astrology, for example, in the first poem of her collection, “While Clear the Night,” in which her Fancy wanders “Throughout the Galaxy’s extended line”

(11). Carter's translation of *The Works of Epictetus* informs much of her stoic lifestyle and grants her financial as well as intellectual independence, as many scholars have noted. But before her success as a Greek translator, Carter first translated *Il Newtonianismo*, an Italian text by Francesco Algarotti in 1737. This translation paved the way for Carter's reputation as a formidable scholar. Algarotti's work on Sir Isaac Newton was intended for a female audience. In her translation of the Italian's work, Carter was able to bring Newton's new and exciting theories of astronomy to the women of her time. According to Mirella Agorni,

In spite of the fact that handbooks for women touched upon many subjects in this period, from health to literature and from art to economics, they carefully avoided scientific areas. Thus, an introduction to the system of thought of the most celebrated among English philosophers, in a text specifically addressed to a female readership, was bound to be perceived as a radical novelty in England in the mid-eighteenth century. (Agorni 191)

Because of her work, Carter's fellow countrywomen had access to the newest scientific discoveries. Furthermore, Carter's translation led to her work on the translation of the Greek philosopher, Epictetus.

As a result of her translation of Epictetus' works, Carter enjoyed fame and financial independence; she also demonstrated the ability of the female mind to comprehend and annotate a complex Stoic work. Upon reading the translation, John Philip Naratier wrote to Carter in Latin, addressing her as "Angliae sidus, orbis literati decus," or *the Star of England, the ornament of the literary world* (reprinted in Jennifer Wallace 315). Indeed, the reception of Carter's translation establishes her as the reigning scholar of British society. Yet, according to Jennifer Wallace, "classically trained women found themselves in the paradoxical situation of

having to become public examples by not exposing themselves, by not pushing themselves too much into the public eye” (317). Moreover, even though women’s translations had become a genre of accepted feminine discourse, Harriet Guest suggests,

Carter’s translation of the *Works of Epictetus*, in comparison with these more feminine publications, was perceived as a much more direct and dramatic intervention in public life. It involved a degree of classical scholarship to which few women had any access, and it made available texts central to political discourse. As a result, Carter achieved a different kind of fame, a fame that made her in some sense public property. (Guest 60)

As a result of her launch into the public spotlight, Carter experienced tremendous pressure to remain the pious example of a Christian woman, whose beliefs clashed with the ancient philosophers.

Carter successfully negotiates the path of virtue in spite of her association with pagan beliefs in her translation by upholding what she perceives as the superior philosophy of Christianity over Stoicism. In fact, as Jennifer Wallace points out,

Carter spent much of her time, both in her written work and in her correspondence, distancing herself from the classical world, pointing out its alienating paganism and suggesting that physical exercise was preferable to scholarship. (Wallace 315)

The exercise that Wallace mentions would, for Carter, be the long, contemplative walks in which she seeks divine wisdom. In a letter to Lady Montagu on December 25, 1764, Carter states: The understanding of the Athenians was enlightened by philosophy, and their genius decorated by the graces; but their hearts were the hearts of barbarians. A sad proof that something more

than the illumination of speculation, reason, and the fine arts, is necessary to dispel the darkness of disordered principles, and tame the savage outrage of the passions. (rpt. in Wallace 315)

In fact, as Wallace further argues, “Moralizing the classics as a defense against charges of intellectual arrogance was becoming a recognizable strategy for the few intellectual women in the eighteenth century (322). Furthermore, as someone who believed this life is a preparation for the eternal life to come, Carter, according to Judith Hawley,

rejects Epictetus’s argument that we should pay no heed to the things of this life. From the point of view of a Stoic or an Ecclesiastes, all is vanity, but Carter’s belief is that to a Christian, earthly experience is valuable in itself and necessary as a preparation for the future. (n. pag.)

Carter not only rejects Epictetus’ path to happiness, she reiterates her own path to virtue in her publication of his *Works*.

In her translation of the Greek *All the Works of Epictetus*, Carter included a long introduction, “in which she described her difficult task in giving new life to a culture which no longer existed” (Agorni 195). This introduction contains passages that both celebrate and refute the Stoic philosophy as Carter compares it to New Testament Christian thought, keeping her good name as a Christian woman with the intellectual gift of languages. She notes,

How different are the Consolations proposed by Christianity, which not only assures its Disciples, that they shall rest from their Labours in Death, but that their works shall follow them: and, by allowing them to rejoice in Hope, teaches them the most effectual Way of becoming patient in Tribulation. (Carter xxii)

She found the Stoic doctrine on deity particularly disturbing: “that human Souls are literally Parts of the Deity, was equally shocking, and hurtful: as it supposed Portions of his Being to be

wicked and miserable” (Carter xxii). Carter was appalled by the concept of a deity whose persona includes the characteristics of sinners. She notes how “far differently the Christian System represents Mankind, not as a Part of the Essence, but a Work of the Hand of God: as created in a State of improvable Virtue and Happiness” (Carter xxii-xxiii). In this observation, Carter mirrors Milton’s proposal that God’s original intent for prelapsarian human beings was to advance gradually to the heavenly realms:

Out of one man a race
Of men, innumerable, there to dwell,
Not here, till by degrees of merit raised
They open to themselves at length the way
Up hither, under long obedience tried,
And Earth be chang’d to Heav’n, and Heav’n to Earth,
One kingdom, joy and union without end. (VII.155-61)

Of course, Milton and Carter belonged to a postlapsarian world, in which their hope rested in the path of virtue leading to eternal life after a temporal existence. Carter observes that the “Stoic Philosophy insults human Nature, and discourages all our Attempts, by enjoining and promising a Perfection in this Life, of which we feel ourselves Incapable” (xxiii). The Stoics prove, according to Carter, “the extreme Need of a divine Assistance, to rectify the Mistakes of a depraved Reason” (xxv). She states:

Whether Reason could have discovered the great Truths, which in these Days are ascribed to it, because now seen so clearly by the Light of the Gospel, may be a *Question*; but that it never did, is an undeniable *Fact*: and that is enough to teach us Thanksgiving for the Blessing of a better Information. (xxiv)

The main deficiency Carter finds in Stoicism, and particularly in Epictetus, is that the philosophy does not promise “divine assistance” in a fallen world.

Carter looks to the same source of deliverance that Milton offers in *Paradise Regained*, a Savior who brings the Spirit of Truth, a paradise within, and proclaims: “A fairer Paradise is founded now/ For Adam and his chosen sons, whom thou / A savior art come down to reinstall” (IV.613-15). The spirit that illuminates the reason of the human mind grants Carter the opportunity to live with intellectual and spiritual liberty. As a woman, however, Carter must still live a prescribed life, and she accepts her circumstances with grace. The value of stoicism, when properly viewed through the optics of her faith, enables her to live determinately and happily: as Judith Hawley suggests,

Carter’s Christian Stoicism represented a ‘freedom from’ rather than a ‘freedom to do’ something. Neither Christianity nor Stoicism could have released her from the duty to sew shirts and so forth yet they released her from feeling oppressed by that duty, indeed, they impressed on her the duty of cheerfulness while observing obligations. (5)

With a wise perspective, Carter uses her experience as the translator of Epictetus for what she can glean from it philosophically and financially. In the *Rambler* 44, she dismisses the portion of stoicism that insists that “Man was born to mourn and to be wretched....Misery is the duty of all sublunary Beings; and every enjoyment is an offense to the deity, who is to be worshipped only by the mortification of sense of pleasure” (108-109). She answers this portion with her own worship of her Creator: “Look round, and survey the various Beauties of this Globe, which heaven has destined for the seat of the human race, and consider, whether a world thus

exquisitely framed, could be meant for the abode of misery and pain” (110). In true Christian fashion, she sees her translation and her poems as a means to forward her faith.

The positive reception of Carter’s poems and her translations ensure her reputation as a scholar and a pious woman. In a letter to Letter to Elizabeth Montague on July 13, 1758, she writes,

The most sensible pleasure I have in the favorable reception given to Epictetus, is by considering it as a proof that people in general are pleased with a well-meant endeavour to promote the cause of Christianity, and those who have never given themselves time to listen to better arguments, may be tempted, by the influence of fashion, to consider these. (7)

As in all of her work, Carter’s concern is for others to experience the same spiritual benefits that she enjoys. Sir George Lyttleton writes a tribute dedication to her in her publication of occasional poems, “On Reading Mrs. Carter’s Poems in Manuscript,” in which he states:

So shall thy strains,
More pow’rful than the song of Orpheus, tame
The savage heart of brutal vice, and bend
At pure religion’s shrine the stubborn knees
Of bold impiety – (9-13)

Lyttleton refers to Carter’s piety as a power that may tame “brutal vice” and resume the song of “seraphic voices” in calling Britain to the same song that praised God as the birth of Christ. Lyttleton claims that Carter’s poetry surpasses that of Sappho, “whose wanton muse / Like a false siren, while she charm’d, seduced / To guilt and ruin (14-17). Moreover, he alludes to her restoration of the lost fidelity of Milton’s Eve in *Paradise Lost*: when Adam hears of Eve’s fatal

trespass, “From his slack hand, the garland wreathed for Eve / Down dropped, and all the faded roses shed” (IX.892-93). Lyttleton writes of Carter:

For the sacred head
Of BRITAIN’S poetess the virtues twine
A nobler wreath, by them from EDEN’S grove
Unfading gather’d, and direct the hand
Of MONTAGU to fix it on her brows. (16-20)

Carter’s audience is quick to recognize the redeeming virtue of her life and work and the importance of her poetic voice to Britain. Furthermore, her audience recognizes Lyttleton’s connection of Carter to Milton.

1.20 The Contemplative Scholar

Carter most resembles Milton’s ideal scholar on the path of virtue in her concepts of contemplation and the renewed mind through divine illumination. According to Milton, she must be worthy to receive the divine illumination necessary to cultivate right reason and the paradise within. As he states in *Prolusion IV*,

For who can worthily gaze upon and contemplate the ideas of things human or divine, unless he possesses a mind trained and ennobled by learning and study, with which he can know practically nothing of them: for indeed every approach to the happy life seems barred to the man who has no part in learning. (795)

From the beginning of her work, Carter focuses her attention on her adoration for God through her contemplation of nature, as well as her indebtedness to Milton’s poetry. In an ode “To *****” (Miss Lynch), she practices contemplation in her studies of the ancient Greeks:

To calm philosophy I next retire,

And seek the joys, her sacred arts inspire,
 Renounce the frolics of unthinking youth,
 To court the more engaging charms of truth:
 With PLATO soar on contemplation's wing,
 And trace perfection to th' eternal spring. (33-38)

Like Milton, Carter appreciates the study of the great philosophers, but sets her sights to a higher source of power. Her voluntary discipline toward learning supersedes most scholars of either sex.

Carter's contemplative study centers on the creation of her God and her adoration of him. In "While Clear the Night," Carter includes an epigraph (translation from the Latin) from Ovid's *Fasti*, I.297-98:

Happy minds that first took the trouble to consider
 These things, and to climb to the celestial regions!
 We can be certain that they raised their heads
 Above the failings and the homes of men, alike.²⁹

Moments of contemplation in the poem elevate the human mind to the heavenly realms. Carter opens her poem with a description of her moonlit walk,

While clear the night, and ev'ry thought serene,
 Let fancy wander o'er the solemn scene:
 And wing'd by active contemplation, rise
 Amidst the radiant wonders of the skies. (1-4)

²⁹ Translation by Thomas Keightley, 1848.

In this passage, Carter alludes to and enters into a long literary tradition of contemplation as a winged creature and demonstrates her knowledge of complex theological concepts. In Milton's *Il Penseroso*, the speaker suggests,

But first, and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The Cherub Contemplation (51-54)

The Cherub in Milton's poem represents the singular of the Cherubim, who are traditionally the angels who contemplate the glory of God. Milton alludes to Ezekiel's prophetic vision of God's throne and the angels who surround Him:

And the Cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them: and everyone stood at the entry of the gate of the Lord's House at the East side, and the glory of the God of Israel was upon them on high. (10:19)

According to A. W. Verity,

When Milton applies to the Cherub the title Contemplation ... he is referring to the mediaeval conception of the Hierarchies. . . . According to it each of the Orders or Choirs into which the heavenly beings were divided had a special power, and the faculty peculiar to the Cherubim was that of ' Knowledge and Contemplation of divine things.' . . . Milton took the mediaeval belief and grafted it on to the narrative of Ezekiel. (102, Reprinted in Huntington note, 74)

Milton carries this image of the sky's wonders in his description of the Son in battle with Satan, when "the third sacred morning began to shine" and

forth rushed with whirlwind sound
 The chariot of paternal deity;
 Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,
 Itself instinct with spirit, but convoyed
 By four cherubic shapes (*Paradise Lost* VI.748-53)

The winged Cherubs signify victory and glory in battle with evil. In “While Still the Night,” Carter references the fancy wandering over the “radiant wonders of the sky,” where the Cherubim carry her thoughts to the throne of God himself. The contemplative fancy that Carter mentions, therefore, joins with the victorious wonders of the heavenly realms and soars with the angels.

Milton reiterates this image in *A Masque* in which the Elder Brother describes the flight of Virtue and Wisdom to the Second Brother:

Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
 By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
 Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom’s self
 Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,
 Where with her best nurse Contemplation
 She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings (373-78)

Carter’s search for virtue and wisdom through contemplation echoes the Lady’s nature that seeks out “retired solitude.”³⁰

³⁰ Alexander Pope also uses Milton’s image in his *Satire IV Versified*, wherein he writes: “Bear me, some God! Oh quickly bear me hence / To wholesome Solitude, the nurse of sense: / Where Contemplation prunes her ruffled wings, / And the free soul looks down to pity Kings!” (184-87).

The search in “While Clear the Night” results in Carter’s adoration of God through his creation. She clearly sees truth in His wonders and writes a strong retort against scientific unbelief,

Let stupid atheists boast th’ atomic dance,
 And call these beauteous worlds the work of chance:
 But nobler minds, from guilt and passion free,
 Where truth unclouded darts the heav’nly ray,
 Or on the earth, or in the aethereal road,
 Survey the footsteps of a ruling God (25-30)

Her contemplation affords her, like Milton’s Lady, a “nobler mind” free “from guilt and passion.” She sees in the heavens the “footsteps” and handiwork of “a ruling God.” In sight of such wonder, Carter worships the creator God,

Whose presence, unconfin’d by time or place,
 Fills all the vast immensity of space.
 He saw while matter yet a chaos lay:
 The shapeless chaos own’d his potent sway (33-36)

Ironically, Carter’s God is unlimited by “time or place,” a parody of Milton’s Satan, the author of confusion, who boasts he has a “Mind not to be chang’d by Place or time” (*Paradise Lost* I.253). Carter’s God, like Milton’s, forms the universe from chaos, and his power lifts her mind through divine illumination.

Carter also mirrors Milton’s use of Urania, the Greek muse of astronomy, as a guide through the heavens. In “To the Same: Occasioned by an Ode Written by Mrs. Phillips,” Carter writes to Miss Lynch that Katherine Phillips, “With mystic sense, the poet’s tuneful tongue /

Urania's birth in glittering fashion sung." Carter's note on the page reads that Urania is "the patroness of friendship, knowledge, and virtue" (16). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton evokes Urania as his muse:

Descend from Heav'n Urania, by that name
 If rightly thou art call'd, whose Voice divine
 Following, above th' Olympian Hill I soare,
 Above the flight of Pegasean wing.
 The meaning, not the Name I call (VII.1-5)

Milton invokes the knowledge and virtue of the goddess rather than her divine power because he intends to soar about Olympus to the heavenly seat of the one true God. Matthew K. Dolloff observes that Milton's

transformed Urania appears in ancient and medieval cosmic journey and dream narratives and evolves by the Renaissance into an oddly Christianized muse. She becomes a vehicle for heavenly, divine truths that each devout Christian rightly senses in his conscience. In this capacity she promotes friendship and chastity. (v)

Milton presumes that Urania "dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires / Easy my unpremeditated Verse" (*Paradise Lost* IX.23-24), or divinely illuminates his narrative. Carter mentions the same divine light in "To the Same, April the 9th," wherein "Pure from the eternal source of Being came / That ray divine, that lights the human frame" (3-4). This heavenly illumination guards her from "Folly's inconsistent schemes, / To guard it safe, by those unerring laws, / That re-unite it to its first great cause" (50-52). Through the light that comes from contemplation of God's glory, Carter joins the happy souls who first sought the great cause and redeems the divine spark that was lost in Eden.

Like Milton, Carter discovers right reason through contemplation. She writes to Miss Highmore on January 9, 1756:

The Contemplation of our Nature would indeed be truly mortifying on the gloomy Supposition that the Soul after being vainly amused by a distant prospect of Something sublime and noble beyond its reach, and wearied by unprofitable Struggles after Liberty, was at last fated to perish with its prison! But thanks to the gracious Author of its Being, the voice of Reason and Revelation bear united Testimony, that he has not left the human Soul to be the only unaccountable, and unfinished work of his Creation” (rpt. in Hampshire 151).

Carter employs the same logical lens through which she views stoicism; the human soul is created to reach for the nobility of the divine in whose image she was created.

The contemplation that ultimately reveals this truth happens best in the quiet of the evening. In “While Night in Solemn Shade Invests the Pole,” Carter asserts that during the silent night, “calm reflexion soothes the pensive soul” and “reason undisturb’d asserts her sway” (2-3).³¹ The poet genders “reason” as a woman, and she prays,

To Thee! All-conscious Presence! I devote
 This peaceful interval of sober thought.
 Here all my better faculties confine,
 And be this hour of sacred silence, thine.
 If by the day’s illusive scenes misled,
 My erring soul from virtue’s path has stray’d (5-10)

³¹ Here Carter’s phrasing again reflects that of Milton in *Paradise Lost*: in Book I, “while Night / Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delays” (207-8), Satan awakes on the burning lake.

Carter's prayer equates reason with an "interval of sober thought," a specific time allotted to contemplation. And in these reflective moments of "sacred silence," she regains "virtue's path." Of course, the soul must relinquish folly in order to accept virtue. Carter bemoans the times when "how oft my lawless passions rove...and violate the virtue I adore!" (17, 20). In moments of sacred contemplation, however, she regains "my volatile inconstant heart" (40). Even the most pious soul is tempted by folly; Carter seeks refuge and restoration in moments of reflection when the divine illuminates the true path.

Like Astell and Chudleigh before her, Carter understands she must let go of trivial matters in order to reach her intellectual liberty. In "Ode to Melancholy," she writes,

No longer wildly hurried thro'
 The tides of mirth, the ebb and flow,
 In folly's noisy stream:
 I from the busy crowd retire,
 To court the objects that inspire
 Thy philosophic dream (7-12)

Carter emphasizes the dangers inherent in acquiring an intellectual mind; the hurriedness and busyness of the crowd in which women find themselves creates "folly's noisy stream," a place of amazement clouds the reason. She must retire to "court the objects that inspire," or in other words, to contemplate the divine attributes of God and his creation, to realize the "philosophic dream." The *OED* defines "philosophic" as "wise, calm, and stoical." Carter prays,

Come, Melancholy! Silent pow'r,
 Companion of my lonely hour,
 To sober thought confin'd

Indulge my pensive mind. (1-4)

The power of divine inspiration penetrates the frivolous and focuses the “pensive” or contemplative mind. She searches by God’s “direction led / Thro’ reason’s clearer optics view’d” (15-16) to “meditate the solemn truth” (53). She wanders where “Thy penetrating beams disperse / This mist of error” (55-56). Carter’s reference to a confusing mist of error echoes Satan’s invasion of Eden, as he evades the guarding angels:

Thus wrapped in mist
Of midnight vapor glide obscure, and pry
In every bush and brake, where hap may find
The serpent sleeping, in whose mazy folds
To hide me, and the dark intent I bring. (*Paradise Lost* IX.158-62)

The illumination of heaven, the “penetrating beams,” has the power to dispel the mist and amazement brought into Paradise by a deceiver. Carter’s *Melancholy* also mirrors Milton’s “*Il Penseroso*,” in content and tone:

Hail divinest Melancholy,
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight:
And therefore to our weaker view,
O’erlaid with black, staid Wisdom’s hue. (11-16)

Milton’s speaker also walks “unseen / On the dry smooth-shaven green, / To behold the wand’ring moon” 65-67). *Melancholy* and moonlight sooth the soul and enlighten the mind.

The moonlit night also offers Carter a glimpse of providence, as in “Written at Midnight in a Thunder Storm,”

Protected by that hand, whose law
 The threatn'ning storms obey,
 Intrepid virtue smiles secure,
 As in the blaze of day. (5-8)

Hidden by God's protecting hand, Providence gives her courage against the storms of life. She may also conquer fear with reason, or "By reason taught to scorn those fears / That vulgar minds molest (21-22). The "blaze of day," or the divine light, illuminates her path under any circumstances.

Carter gives the same attributes she bestows on Melancholy to Pallas Athena³² in "Ode to Wisdom."³³ Carter writes of Wisdom, "She loves the cool, the silent eve, / Where no false shows of life deceive, / Beneath the lunar ray" (13-15). She asks Wisdom,

To me thy better gifts impart,
 Each moral beauty of the heart
 By studious thought refin'd:
 For wealth, the smiles of glad content,
 For pow'r, its amplest, best extent,
 An empire o'er my mind. (37-42)

Wisdom grants the woman the finer, nobler beauty that comes from within, a product of study and contemplation of God. The "wealth" that Wisdom bestows is the peace of contentment, not the jostling noise of confusion. Wisdom, through the "potent voice of truth," gives the gifts that

³² Pallas Athena is the Greek goddess of wisdom, and she is often represented by the emblem of the owl.

³³ Samuel Richardson quotes from Carter's "Ode to Wisdom" in his novel *Clarissa*, demonstrating his adoration for Carter's work.

Pallas gave to Athens, when the “passions ceas’d their loud alarms, / And virtue’s soft persuasive charms / O’er all their senses stole” (70-72). Carter, however, ultimately looks to her God for the gift of wisdom and the benefits of intellectual freedom:

To Thee! Supreme, all-perfect Mind,
 My thoughts direct their flight:
 Wisdom’s thy gift, and all her force
 From Thee deriv’d, unchanging source
 Of intellectual light!
 O send her sure, her steady ray,
 To regulate my doubtful way,
 Thro’ life’s perplexing road,
 The mists of error to control. (80-88)

For Carter, God is the source of wisdom and “intellectual light,” who illuminates the misty path to virtue when the poet directs her thoughts, like the Cherubim³⁴ Contemplation, in flight to his “all-perfect Mind.”

Carter repeats the sentiment of contemplation of the divine, intellectual mind in the ode “To Mrs. Vesey.” She begins the poem,

Silent and cool the dews of ev’ning fall,
 Hush’d is the vernal music of the groves,
 From yon thick boughs the birds of darkness call,

³⁴ *During the early modern period, the cherubim represented both “a divine of surpassing intellect” (OED 3a.) and “fullness of knowledge, or a celestial virtue” (1.b.)*

And mark the walk that contemplation loves. (1-4)

Again, the poet walks and meditates in the evening, away from the crowds. Here, she finds that

“Imagination feels a sacred dread, / And awes to sober thought th’ astonish’d mind” (7-8).

“Astonished” denotes the same paralyzing amazement that Adam experiences when he first hears

Eve’s confession:

Adam, soon as he heard

The fatal trespass done by Eve, amazed

Astonied stood and blank, while horror chill

Ran through his veins, and all his joints relaxed (*Paradise Lost* IX.888-91)

Adam’s perplexed posture reflects the astonishment that darkens the minds of all his

descendants, including women such as Carter. In the “solemn scene” (26), where is “only heard

the ‘still small voice’ within” (28), the poet is lifted to where

To perfect good, thro’ each progressive stage,

The pow’rs of intellectual Being tend,

Nor raging elements, nor wasting age

Shall e’er defeat their heav’n-appointed end. (45-48)

Contemplation in the quiet evening restores the perfection of the intellect and the calm of the paradise within.

Carter’s contemplation takes place in nature, the reflection of God’s glory. In one of her many untitled odes, she describes the scene near her home: “Ye groves that wave o’er

contemplation’s dream, / How aptly were your peaceful joys design’d / To match the temper of

Bethia’s mind” (“To *****” 24-26). Bethia, or “Bithyah” (בִּיתְיָהּ) is the Hebrew name for “a

daughter or worshiper of Yahweh (Strong’s *Concordance* 1332). In this passage, Carter desires

to capture the temper, or temple, of the mind of a worshipper of God. Because she seeks this connection in the retirement of nature, she is appalled at the idea of destroying a natural sanctuary. In “To ***** , On His Design of Cutting Down a Shady Walk,” she voices her strong feelings:

Ah! Stop thy sacrilegious hand,
Nor violate the shade,
Where nature form'd a silent haunt
For contemplation's aid. (5-8)

Carter also enjoys the scene of the sea nearby her home, and the movement of the water causes her to pause and reflect, as in “Written Extempore on the Sea-Shore”:

Thou restless fluctuating deep,
Expressive of the human mind,
In thy for-ever-varying form,
My inconstant self I find.
Blest emblem of that equal state,
Which I this moment feel within: (1-8)

The restlessness of the sea reminds Carter of the stillness and peace she experiences within. She expresses her gratitude for her peaceful mental state, again in the quiet of the evening, in another untitled poem:

The midnight moon serenely smiles,
O'er nature's soft repose;
No low'ring cloud obscures the sky,
Nor ruffling tempest blows.

Now ev'ry passion sinks to rest,
 The throbbing heart lies still,
 And varying schemes of life no more
 Distract the lab'ring will.
 In silence hush'd, to reason's voice
 Attends each mental pow'r:
 Come, dear Emilia, and enjoy
 Reflexion's fav'rite hour. (1-12)

In this passage, Carter employs disturbing imagery through verbs, such as “low’ring,” “obscures,” “throbbing,” and “lab’ring.” The opposing image of “hush’d’ silence is the voice of reason, the power to focus the mind to reflection.

Carter demonstrates her passion for the enlightened feminine mind in “The Dialogue,” a light-hearted poem in which the poet inverts the traditional concept of gendered mind and body. Jane Magrath points out “the poem offers a daring and radical challenge,” in that a “woman was typically relegated to the body and represented in opposition to the purely masculine province of mind” (215). Just as Eve resists her confinement to Adam’s side and ventures forth in the “dust and heat” (*Areopagitica*) in search of knowledge, Carter’s speaker proclaims her frustration at traditional containment in feminine flesh, where she is “cramped and confined like a slave in a chain” (22). The Mind “did but step out, on some weighty affairs, / To visit, last night my good friends in the stars” (23-24). Lisa A. Freeman rightly asserts the Mind “considers the restraints imposed on her speculative ventures as the most appalling and unacceptable condition of her marriage to the body” (55). Carter’s resistance to confinement by the body, however, carries a weightier significance for the poet: Carter’s Mind, as Freeman points out, “intimates the view

that she so often expressed in her letters that the mind constitutes the essence of the female soul” (53). In Carter’s poem, the Mind must be free of the Body to wander into the wonders of God’s creation, contemplate the celestial cosmos, and receive the divine inspiration that frees her from bondage. Carter’s Mind fulfills Milton’s prescription for the natural human propensity for wonder. In *Areopagitica*, he writes: “This justifies the high providence of God, who though he command us temperance, justice, continence, yet pours out before us even to a profuseness all desirable things and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety” (944). In order to “wander beyond all limit and satiety,” the Mind seeks out the stars in contemplation of God’s glory.

Carter’s entire life’s work can be analyzed through the prism of elevating the human mind, especially for women. She writes to Mrs. Underdown on 5 September 1738:

What an unaccountable Thing, under some dispositions, is the human Mind! An Astronomer can settle the Revolutions of the Heavens and reconcile the seeming irregularities of the Wandering Orbs; But there are some mental Extravagances infinitely more difficult to be accounted for than the wild Motions of a Comet. The Clue we make Use of to extricate ourselves from a Labyrinth of winding Thoughts is often entangled in them and while we keep puzzling to undo the Knot we often break the Thread and are left to blunder out our way without a Guide. But I would not have you imagine from all these curious Reflections that I am setting up for a wit³⁵ by depreciating the Faculties of the Soul (which some wits

³⁵ Hampshire’s note on wit: “1. The seat of consciousness, thought, the mind. 2. The faculty of thinking, reasoning, intellect, mental capacity, genius: the saying of smart and brilliant things (*OED*). Here Miss Carter alludes to philosophical problems much under consideration: the relationship between Body and Soul and between Reason and the Soul” (53).

you now are very fond of) since all I mean relates only to set of vague fantastical Ideas we sometime fall into, and does not at all impeach the power of Reason in more important Concerns” (rpt. in Hampshire 52-53).

Carter’s assurance that reason prevails over every “fantastical idea” stems from her unfailing faith in the source of reason, not merely in human endeavors and decisions. Her course to virtue ensures the peaceful life of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment.

1.21 Virtue and Liberty

In two imitations, Carter sings the praises of the virtuous life. In her imitation of Horace, she quotes from his Ode 22 in the epigraph, “Integer Vitae, Scelerisque purus, &c.,” or “Of upright life and pure of sin.” Here, once more, she echoes Milton’s admonition for the recipient of divine illumination: “And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer / Before all temples th’ upright heart and pure” (*Paradise Lost* I.17-18). She begins the poem, “A Virtuous Man, whose Acts and Thoughts are pure, / Without the help of weapons is secure” (1-2). She asserts that for the upright human being, “Toils, Dangers, Difficulties all defy’d, / His Passport Virtue, Providence his Guide,” (11-12), for “Amidst the Terrors of that Dismal Scene, / His mind preserves a settled Calm within” (19-20). Just as the Mind is separate and in opposition to the Body in “The Dialogue,” the virtuous are able to draw strength and peace from within in any circumstances. Carter expresses the same sentiment in her epigraph to “Whate’er we think on’t, Fortune’s but a Toy”: “Nullum Numen habes si sit Prudentia, sed te Nos facimus, Fortuna, Deam, Coeloque locamus,” or “Thou wouldst have no divinity, O Fortune, if we had but wisdom; it is we that make a goddess of thee, and place thee in the skies” (15).³⁶ This passage

³⁶ Translation by G. G. Ramsay, Juvenal’s *Satires*.

ends Juvenal's Satire Ten, "The Vanity of Human Wishes," a work that inspired both Lady Mary Chudleigh and Samuel Johnson. In the poem, Carter writes:

From virtue only those Delights must flow,
Which neither Wealth nor Titles can bestow.
A Soul, which uncorrupted Reason Sways,
With calm Indifference Fortune's Gifts surveys. (43-36)

Of course, for Carter, the only possible way to possess an "uncorrupted Reason," is through the redeeming spirit of God, and the virtuous Soul may be reunited with him in eternity.

Carter often pairs virtue with time by showing folly as transient and virtue as eternal. In "To *****. On a Watch," Carter writes,

Unlike the triflers whose contracted view
Ne'er looks beyond a glitt'ring outside show,
In this machine with moral eyes survey
How gliding life steals silently away,
And mindful of its short determined space,
Improve the flying moments, as they pass. (1-6)

Like Astell and Chudleigh, Carter advises that the fleeting glamour of vanity takes up much of the prime of life, a time which should be spent in improving the mind and the soul. Attention must be paid to "undecaying Soul" (22); she instructs, "To this unfailing excellence devote / The morn of reason, and the prime of thought" (23-24), for "youth may languish, and that beauty fade" (25). The only knowledge worth gaining is wisdom since "Destructive years no graces leave behind, / But those, which virtue fixes in the mind" (27-28). She ends the poem with the advice she gleans from the imitation of Juvenal: "And seek from beauties form'd on virtue's

rules, / Th' applause of angels, not the gaze of fools" (51-52). For Carter, time well spent in youth results in virtue, the only path to happiness.

In another untitled ode, Carter admonishes the recipient to guard time. She writes,

Yet equal to our being's aim
 The space to virtue giv'n:
 And every minute well improv'd
 Secures an age in heav'n. (13-16)

Redemption of virtue is "our being's aim," and the redemption of virtue demands the redemption of time. Vanity leaves a woman empty in her late life, as Carter explains in another anonymous ode:

Each moral pleasure of the heart,
 Each lasting charm of truth,
 Depends not on the giddy aid
 Of wild, inconstant youth.
 The vain coquet, whose empty pride
 A fading face supplies,
 May justly dread the wintry gloom,
 Where all its glory dies. (1-8)

Women of her time rely on outward beauty and vain accomplishments to secure their places in society, yet those are the very accruements that eventually fade. The anecdote for "wintry gloom" lies in the cultivation of virtue and the elevation of the intellect.

Carter's descriptions of fleeting youth reflect the sentiments of Milton's poem "On Time," in which the poet describes the fleeting span of life:

Fly envious Time, till thou run out thy race,
 Call on the lazy leaden-stepping hours,
 Whose speed is but the heavy Plummets pace;
 And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,
 Which is no more than what is false and vain (1-5)

Of course, for men to choose rightly to abandon vain pursuits is easier than for women, whose culture does not encourage the repulse of vanity and the embrace of intellectual virtue.

In a letter to Lady Montague, Carter describes a scene in which women are excluded from intellectual conversation:

As if the two sexes had been in a state of war, the gentlemen ranged themselves on one side of the room, where they talked their own talk, and left us poor ladies to twirl our shuttles, and amuse each other, by conversing as we could. By what little I could overhear, our opposites were discoursing on the old English poets, and this subject did not seem so much beyond a female capacity, but that we might have been indulged with a share of it. (47-48)

As Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz point out, “the discussion of ‘old English poets’ was arguably particularly suited to women, who were important contributors to a new sense of national literary tradition” (33). The exclusion of women from any conversation that might help them redefine virtue for themselves only results in keeping them in the ignorant position of creatures who cannot use right reason to make virtuous decisions without the guidance of men.

In more personal odes, Carter’s tone reaches an urgent level when advising young women to plot a nobler path than the one laid out by society. In “To Miss *****. From Her Guardian Angel,” Carter writes,

O listen to my faithful voice,
 Which, mov'd by sacred truth,
 From fading joys to real good,
 Shall guide thy careless youth.
 Seek not from charms of mortal birth
 To purchase empty fame:
 With early wisdom learn to trace
 Thy Being's nobler aim. (9-16)

Carter's urgency stems from the knowledge of "sacred truth" that teaches that moments are to be treasured early in life. Again, she warns,

To Time's inexorable pow'r
 Has heav'n's decree consign'd,
 All but the undecaying bloom
 Of fair, immortal Mind. (25-28)

According to Carter's theology, all fades in the human being except the Mind. The Mind is an incorruptible "bloom," or a "state of greatest beauty or loveliness, most flourishing condition or season, prime, perfection" (*OED* 2). Reiterating the importance of time and eternity in another ode to Miss Lynch, Carter again uses the image of the bird in flight to emphasize the despair that comes from waiting until youth has passed to attempt the arduous elevation of the mind to nobler things:

Thus the false forms of vanity descend,
 And in the gloom of long oblivion end:
 Unreal phantoms, empty, void of pow'r,

Borne on the fleeting pinions³⁷ of an hour!
 Desert in death the disappointed mind,
 Nor leave a trace of happiness behind! (21-26)

Carter assures Miss Lynch that she possesses the intellectual capacity in the temple of her mind to rise above the “unreal phantoms” to divine truth:

O blest with talents fitted to obtain
 What wild unthinking folly seeks in vain,
 To whom, peculiarly indulgent, heav'n
 The noblest means of happiness was giv'n,
 From joys unfixt, that is possession die,
 From Falsehood's path, my dear Narcissa, fly. (27-32)

The “noblest means of happiness,” human virtue through divine illumination, is a gift from heaven and available to any who seek it. And virtue is the only path to happiness in this life and in the next, as Carter explains in a note on her translation of *Epicetus*: “Happiness, the effect of virtue, is the mark which God hath set up for us to aim at. Our missing it is no work of His; nor so properly anything real, as a mere negative and failure of our own. -- C.” (386). In this note, Carter explicates the idea of proairesis, the virtuous choice that a mind infused with right reason can make.

³⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “pinion” as “A bird's wing; esp. (chiefly poet. and rhetorical) the wing of a bird in flight. Also: the terminal segment of a bird's wing, bearing the primary flight feathers” (I.1.a.), and also as “A wing-like adornment or style of a garment's shoulder or sleeve, fashionable in the 16th and 17th centuries” (5.b). In this passage, Carter could be using a play on words to denote both the winged, contemplate soul or the vanity of eighteenth-century women's fashion.

Women, as Carter suggests, must search for their protection and vocation with an eternal viewpoint. As Carter explains in “To the Earl of Bath,”

For oft, alas! Amidst our fairest aim,
 The busy passions mix their fatal art,
 Perplex defective virtue’s genuine scheme,
 And slyly warp the unsuspecting heart.
 Oft too, by inconsistent crouds misled,
 Our devious steps thro’ winding mazes stray:
 How few the simple path of duty tread,
 And stedfast keep their heav’n-directed way! (33-40)

The passage suggests that virtue has a “genuine scheme” that can be won with a better prepared heart. The “winding mazes” that deter us from the “simple path of duty” mirror those fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*, who are left in a state of amazement and who “found no end, in wand’ring mazes lost” (II.561) Carter ends the ode to William Putney, the Earl of Bath, with a reference to the divine spark that inhabits the virtuous mind:

Amidst the waste of years, preserve intire,
 The undecaying spirit’s nobler part,
 The vivid spark of intellectual fire,
 And the gentler graces of the heart. (57-60)

Such is the progress of the life of education, contemplation, right reason, and proairesis, relying on the “intellectual fire” of the spirit.

Carter explains the results of her choice to embrace right reason in her letter to *The Rambler*, wherein she personifies Religion, who says, “My Name is *Religion*. I am the offspring

of *Truth*" (110). Religion transforms the author's dream setting to "gay and blooming as the Garden of Eden" (109). In her letter, Carter further echoes Milton's epistemology when she observes, "The proper Tendency of every rational Being, from the highest Order of raptured Seraphs to the meanest Rank of Men, is to rise incessantly from lower Degrees of Happiness to higher; and each have Faculties assigned them for various Orders of Delight" (110-11). In Book V of *Paradise Lost*, Raphael teaches Adam that "In contemplation of created things / By steps we may ascend to God" (511-12). Carter suggests, "Whoever would be really happy, must make the diligent and regular exercise of his superior Powers his chief Attention, adoring the Perfections of his Maker" (111-12). True happiness, for Carter, involves the rational mind in reflection of creation and the search for truth.

1.22 Performing Valor

One of Carter's virtuous mentors demonstrated what it meant to follow a better path. In Carter's tribute "On the Death of Mrs. Rowe," wherein the poet again mentions the "art" that discredits women when "Oft did intrigue its guilty arts unite, / To blacken the records of female wit" (1-2), she suggests once more the noble purpose of the human mind:

Those gifts for nobler purposes assign'd,
 To raise the thoughts, and moralize the mind;
 The chaste delights of virtue to inspire,
 And warm the bosom with seraphic fire;³⁸
 Sublime the passions, lend devotion wings,

³⁸ Carter uses the same adjective, "seraphic," to describe Rowe as Sir Thomas ascribes to her. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "seraphic" as "Resembling a seraph, either in beauty or in fervour of exalted devotion" (3.a) and "Of discourse, actions, appearance: showing ecstasy of devout contemplation" (3.b). Horace Walpole also uses the angelic adjective to describe Mrs. Rowe: "That seraphic dame, Mrs. Rowe, also painted" (71).

And celebrate the first great CAUSE of things. (7-12)

Carter emphasizes the virtuous example Mrs. Rowe gives all women who come after her: “Hers ev’ry happy elegance of thought, / Refin’d by virtue, as by genius wrought” (17-18). And just as Rowe leaves a path for her to follow, Carter forges a path for women who follow her. Like Astell and Chudleigh, Carter sees virtue as something to be shared, as she writes in “To Mrs. Vesey,”

Not for themselves the toiling artists build,
 Nor for himself contrives the studious sage:
 To distant views by mystic force compell’d,
 All give the present to the future age. (13-16)

More and more, scholars such as Priscilla Dorr, Lisa Freeman, and Judith Hawley recognize the contribution that Carter makes to the “future age” of women: Carter in fact views her legacy as an obligatory result of the force of God’s spirit of truth living within her.

Just as in Milton’s epic, wherein true poetic inspiration may only be given to the “upright heart and pure” (*Paradise Lost* 1.18), Carter finds divine inspiration as a reward for her obedience and virtue. Pennington quotes Lady Herford as saying, “But what adds to the wonder she excites, is, that this learning has not made her the less reasonable woman, the less dutiful daughter, or the less agreeable and faithful friend” (30). Moreover, according to her nephew, Carter’s “heart was open to the keenest sensibility for all the distresses of the afflicted; and her mind piously resigned to meet with fortitude the changes and chances of life” (Pennington 35). Even though Carter’s nephew may have exaggerated her virtues as a matter of public relations, Carter’s numerous contributions to charities from her meager living supports his high praise. As important as Carter’s own writing, her example as a financially independent and a virtuous philanthropist has a tremendous influence on women who saw her as their champion.

Carter becomes a champion for those who suffer in this life as well as in heavenly pursuits. In a letter to Henrietta Laura Pulteney, dated June 27, 1788, Carter writes,

I am sure you have too gentle and humane a disposition not to be interested for the poor Negroes, and therefore you will rejoice with me, that Mr. Pitt has in so decided a manner declared himself in their Favour. The putting an End to this dreadful Cruelty and oppression will do Honour to our Age, to our Country and our Religion. There is something very noble, in not suffering any little particular commercial Interest, to outweigh the Importance of a Measure founded on the eternal and universal Laws of Justice and mercy. Wherever a Regard to what is right in itself, is made the leading principle of Action, the Event must be happy to Nations, as well as to Individuals. The supreme Governour of the Universe will always support his own Laws, and secure the Happiness of all who best observe them. (rpt. in Hampshire 167)

The letter marks Carter as an abolitionist at heart, who is not afraid to voice her views on mercy and justice. Although not as politically outspoken as some others, Carter explains in a letter to Lady Hesketh, dated June 7, 1791 that her allegiance belongs to another kingdom:

The imperfect and precarious enjoyment of our best Affections, is wisely adapted to check our too great Fondness for a State, not designed for our final Abode: and to excite our Endeavours for the Attainment of that happier World, where every virtuous pleasure will forever subsist, uninterrupted and secure. (rpt. in Hampshire 172)

Even though she is not as politically active as some might like, Carter is empathetic to the suffering of others. She writes to Hannah More, a fellow Bluestocking, on October 29, 1789, concerning the French Revolution:

I am sure you sometimes think with Compassion on the miserable Situation or our poor neighbours on the Continent. Every benevolent mind would wish that all the Nations of the Earth might enjoy the Advantages of civil and religious Liberty. Yet however desirable the End, the Heart sinks at a view of the present Confusion and Horrors, with which great Revolutions are usually attended. Yet so it must be: for unless the Interposition of a Miracle, Reformation must be brought about by bad men. The scrupulously conscientious dare not submit to such practices, nor will they condescend to use such Instruments, as the corrupted State of Mankind are necessary to procure great and important Changes in the Constitution of the moral world. Let our pride confess, that it is not human Wisdom, it is not human Virtue to which we are indebted for remarkable public Reformation, but to the providence of God which makes the selfish and ambitious passions of men his Instruments of general Good. (Hampshire 169)

As in all other matters, Carter looks to providence for change as superior to any unguided human endeavor, and she explains the failings of the revolution in terms of the necessity of evil men in control unless by a miracle, people look to God for moral changes. Even evil men, however, can be used by a merciful God to bring about social change.

Of course, early biographers such as her nephew, Montagu Pennington, give us the information we need to assess Carter's success as a writer and as a woman from only a man's point of view. Recent scholarship delves deeper into Carter's contribution to feminism. Indeed,

according to Claudia Thomas, “Because piety was, in fact, the main characteristic that Pennington wished to stress, he failed to analyze many dimensions of Carter’s personality that seem especially compelling today: her need to excel, her nervous energy, her insistence on protecting her daily scholarly routine” (19). Recent scholarship analyzes Carter’s work and correspondence that suggest a greater depth to her influence. Thomas explains why scholars have recently turned their attention to Carter:

Elizabeth Carter, especially, deserves attention as an eighteenth-century woman whose energy, ambition, and keen sense of irony were as important as her piety to her career. In fact, Carter’s posthumously published correspondence unwittingly dramatizes contemporary women’s struggle to reconcile domestic and intellectual activities. Her letters, replete with critical analyses and domestic anecdotes, yield insight into Carter’s intellectual life and culturally imposed limitation. (18)

Carter, like Astell and Chudleigh before her, make a way for women who come after them to get an education, abandon vanity and folly, and reach a state of intellectual independence through contemplation, right reason, and proairesis.

Carter’s legacy consists of a life lived in service to her God and others. As Judith Hawley observes, “She was revered both for her own achievements and for making learning respectable for other women” (n. pag.). Milton insists that the individual chooses virtue through a path that leads to right reason and divine illumination, and Carter follows that same path, setting the example as a woman scholar. Abandoning the vain pursuits that lead to a life of frivolity and ignorance, she embodies the redefined virtue for women that her predecessors imagined. If indeed “reason is but choosing” (*Areopagitica* 1010), Elizabeth Carter chooses well.

7 AFTERWORD: A LEGACY OF VALOR AND VIRTUE

Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story.

Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree;

the pen has been in their hands. (Jane Austen, *Persuasion*)

John Milton's was certainly not the only voice proclaiming personal liberty and intellectual theology leading up to the eighteenth century, but his was the loudest. Subsequently, the women who heard that voice and adopted his ideology as their own pathway to a new definition of virtue through education, contemplation, and right reason left a legacy for the women who followed them to make significant contributions to nineteenth-century reform movements. At the turn of the century, women writers such as Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft exercised their definition of feminine virtue and their public voices in causes and reforms that addressed oppression, poverty, and gender inequality. By using their talents and education for the good of their communities, these women take pen in hand to perform valorous acts.

Hannah More attended meetings of the Bluestockings when Elizabeth Carter was an elder spokesperson for feminine intellectualism. Like Carter, she gained some education from her father. According to Roger Lonsdale, however, More's father, had "some misgivings about female pedants" (Lonsdale 323). Financially independent by means of a broken engagement and employment as a teacher, More devoted her life to learning and writing, and after a youth spent pursuing fame, she turned her talent towards religious and social reform.

Part of More's education included Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which she refers to several times in her own work. For example, she describes Milton's as "the sublimest hand that ever held the poetic pencil" (50) and uses two of Milton's characters, Belial and Abdiel, to prove her

assertion that “sentiment is the virtue of *ideas*, and principle the virtue of *action*” (“Of Sentimental Connexions” 49). In her treatise on female education, she suggests,

I would make it the criterion of true taste, right principle, and genuine feeling, in a woman, whether she would be less touched with all the flattery of romantic and exaggerated panegyric than with that beautiful picture of correct and elegant propriety which Milton draws out of our first mother. (*Female Education* 7)

More’s appreciation of Milton’s portrayal of Eve stems from Adam’s description of the ideal wife: “Those thousand decencies that daily flow / From all her words and actions” (*Paradise Lost* VIII. 601-602). Milton’s poetic picture of the ideal woman allows More the latitude from which to make her own claims about the possible virtue of women.

Furthermore, More employs the image of the tree of knowledge in her description of learning in a postlapsarian world:

The tree of knowledge, as a punishment, perhaps, for its having been at first unfairly tasted, cannot now be climbed without difficulty; and this very circumstance serves afterwards to furnish not only literary pleasures, but moral advantages. For the knowledge which is acquired by unwearied assiduity is lasting in the possession, and sweet to the possessor. (*Female Education* 201)

More shares Milton’s concept of education leading to proairesis in her essays designed for young ladies when she “hazard(s) a few short remarks on that part of the subject of education, which I would call *education of the heart*” (“On Education” 124). She contends that “too little regard is paid to the dispositions of the *mind*, that the indications of the *temper* are not properly cherished, nor the affections of the heart sufficiently regulated” (124-25). She advises that in the course of a woman’s education, “Let the graces be industriously cultivated, but let them not be cultivated at

the expense of the virtues” (125). More’s epistemological approach to education mirrors that of Milton and the eighteenth-century women writers who came before her.

More does not, however, confine her writing to affairs concerning women; she uses her talent and her voice for social reform. Responding to the Gin Craze that swept London during the eighteenth century, More writes “The Gin-Shop; Or, a Peep into a Prison.” In writing about the social dangers of alcoholism, she paints a personal portrait of the scourge of drunkenness on the poor. Of all the oppressive circumstances associated with poverty, she claims alcoholism is “a self-inflicted Curse” (8), one of the taxes that is “self-impos’d, / And hardest to endure” (25-26). She includes images of “harmless babes,” who “are poorly clothed and fed” (37-38); the “shivering female,” who “plies her woeful trade” (57-58); and she describes “Those little wretches trembling there / With hunger and with cold,” neglected by parents whose “love of drink, / To Sin and Misery sold” their livelihood (65-68). As a woman and as a writer, More gives an empathetically charged account of the effects of a social ill on the family.

In addition to her work involving education and reform for the poor, More’s association with the abolition movement leads her to write about the personal effects of slavery; she employs the devices of many of the slave narratives in that she appeals to the emotional response of a Christian audience to human suffering. In one of her Cheap Repository tracts, “The Sorrows of Yamba,” More writes of a woman torn from her home and her children: “Child from Mother too they tear, / All for love of filthy Gold” (35-36). She includes an appeal to virtue;

Cease, ye British Sons of murder!
 Cease from forging Afric’s Chain;
 Mock your Saviour’s name no further,
 Cease your savage lust of gain. (161-64)

In *Slavery, a Poem* More compares the mind of a slave to the mind of all human beings, the “native genius of the sable race” and grants African minds “the power of equal thought” (2-4). She asks, “Does matter govern spirit? Or is mind / Degraded by the form to which ‘tis joined?” (7-8). The argument for intellectual equality for women is the same as the argument More uses for the mental capacity of the African slave.

More consistently proves her heart for the less fortunate in her world, yet her work was limited by her evangelical leanings that preserved a measure of the status quo regarding the subjection and submission of women. Opening the path of virtue through right reason to all women required the courage of a woman such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who audaciously proposed that women share political and social equality with men in all areas of life. Her definition of virtue for women widened the path and sowed the seeds of modern feminism.

Wollstonecraft’s childhood experience played a significant part in her perception of the inequality between men and women. Her father was an abusive man who failed to keep the family financially sound. Therefore, Wollstonecraft was required to find a way to earn a living early in her life. As Keira Stevenson observes, “As she grew older, Mary became disillusioned with the idea of marriage, and promised herself that she would be able to live independently, free of any overbearing men complicating her life” (n. page.). Unlike Carter, Wollstonecraft had to carve out an education through borrowed books belonging to her wealthy employers. Wollstonecraft made the most of her limited educational opportunities, however, and she became the prominent advocate for the education of women in the later eighteenth century.

Like Mary Astell, Wollstonecraft both utilizes and resists Milton’s ideology, depending on the particular point she is trying to make. In her response to Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on*

Revolution in France, Wollstonecraft cites Milton's views of a progressively improving world through human effort. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, she writes,

If beautiful weakness be interwoven in a woman's frame, if the chief business of her life be (as you insinuate) to inspire love, and Nature has made an eternal distinction between the qualities that dignify a rational being and this animal perfection, her duty and happiness in this life must clash with any preparation for a more exalted state. So that Plato and Milton were grossly mistaken in asserting that human love led to heavenly, and was only an exaltation of the same affection.
(114)

Barbara Taylor asserts, "The most immediate sources for this platonic element in Wollstonecraft's thought were obviously Milton, whom she quoted endlessly and whose ambiguous views on women she worried at throughout the *Rights of Women*" (115). Moreover, Wollstonecraft quotes Milton in *Mary A Fiction*: her protagonist Mary says, "Milton has asserted, 'That earthly love is the scale by which to heavenly we may ascend'" (107). Mary paraphrases Book VIII of *Paradise Lost*, wherein Raphael tells Adam,

In loving thou dost well, in passion not,
Wherein true love consists not; love refines
The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat
In reason, and is judicious, is the scale
By which to Heavn'ly love thou may'st ascend (588-92)

Wollstonecraft was keenly aware of Milton's work and its influence, and she was willing to use it as proof text when she needed it. She departs from Milton and the women who came before her, however, in matters concerning women's relationship to men.

Unlike the conservative women from Astell to More, Wollstonecraft was not bound by traditional religious views of women's subordination to men. Claire Grogan suggests that unlike More who describes females influencing national events through household behavior (raising children, educating the poor, enforcing the socially ordained hierarchy), Wollstonecraft presents females being educated and emancipated by reading and then claiming political positions and jobs in the market place as members of society at large and not just in the microcosm afforded by the home. (103)

Wollstonecraft employs her strongest criticism of Milton in his portrayal of Adam and Eve, specifically their marriage relationship. She confronts Satan's description of Adam and Eve in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*:

Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
 For contemplation he and valour formed,
 For softness she and sweet attractive Grace,
 He for God only, she for God in him. (296-99)

She criticized this passage as depicting Eve as the weak partner:

Thus Milton describes our first frail mother; though when he tells us that women were formed for softness and sweet attractive grace, I cannot comprehend his meaning, unless, in the true Mahometan³⁹ strain, he meant to deprive us of souls, and insinuate that we were beings only designed by sweet attractive grace, and

³⁹ Carol H. Poston notes of this passage that "Islam (the religion whose chief prophet was Mohammed) did not allow women to go to heaven and denied them souls" (19).

docile blind obedience, to gratify the senses of men when he can no longer soar
on the wing of contemplation. (*Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 19)

The underlining thought in Milton's poem, according to Wollstonecraft, is that women do not possess the contemplative mind. Furthermore, Eve tells Adam, "God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more / Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise" (*Paradise Lost* (IV.637-38). Wollstonecraft vehemently resists Milton's subrogation of the wife, and "invoked the protestant imperative for direct dealing with one's Maker" (Taylor 109). She determines that women are equally responsible to their Creator as men and should therefore be allowed equal access to virtue through education. She writes, "In treating, therefore, of the manners of women, let us, disregarding sensual arguments, trace what we should endeavor to make them in order to cooperate, if the expression be not too bold, with the supreme Being" (*Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 21). Wollstonecraft invokes the same sola scriptura Milton advocates for all individuals:

For if it be allowed that women were destined by Providence to acquire human virtues, and, by the exercise of their understandings, that stability of character which is the firmest ground to rest our future hopes upon, they must be permitted to turn to the foundation of light, and not forced to shape their course by the twinkling of a mere satellite. (20)

Wollstonecraft's reference to the "foundation of light" mirrors Milton's insistence on divine illumination as a requisite for right reason. She further compares his characters' descriptions of one another with a passage in which Milton "seems to coincide with me" (20) in Adam's supplication for a rational partner. Wollstonecraft asserts that Milton's passages are inconsistent

but claims that “into similar inconsistencies are great men often led by their senses” (20). Adam asks God,

Among *unequals* what society
 Can sort, what harmony or true delight?
 Which must be mutual, in proportion due
 The one intense, the other still remiss
 Cannot well suit with either, by soon prove
 Tedious alike: of *fellowship* I speak
 Such as I seek, fit to participate
 All rational delight (*Paradise Lost* VIII. 383-92)

Wollstonecraft and Milton agree that an educated and rational wife is the only fit companion for a husband; otherwise, the vanity of the frivolous woman becomes tedious. Wollstonecraft inverts the roles of the contemplative wife and the cruel husband in her unfinished novel that tells the story of a wife trapped in an unhappy union.

Wollstonecraft employs Milton’s use of imagery in her novel *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*.⁴⁰ As Thomas Keymer points out, Maria uses Milton’s image of the punishment of Mezentius in a passage from *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, wherein he asserts that “where no correspondence is of the mind...they will be rather two carcasses chained unnaturally

⁴⁰ In the novel, Darnford sends Maria two books to ease her mental suffering while in the madhouse, Dryden’s *Fables* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (18).

together” (903).⁴¹ Wollstonecraft’s Maria, bereft of the like-mindedness that would comfort her in her marriage, says,

Are not, I thought, the despots for ever stigmatized, who, in the wantonness of power, commanded even the most atrocious criminals to be chained to dead bodies? Though surely those laws are much more inhuman, which forge adamantine fetters to bind minds together that never can mingle in social communion! (98)

Keymer further observes that the “adamantine fetters” that “bind minds together” in Wollstonecraft’s novel allude to the unbreakable chains that hold Satan to the floor of hell in Book I of *Paradise Lost* (564): Satan is cast out of the communion of heaven, “With hideous ruin and combustion down / To bottomless perdition, there to dwell / In adamantine chains and penal fire” (46-48). The marriage laws of Wollstonecraft’s time punish both men and women who are unequally bound to partners with less contemplative and virtuous minds.

Wollstonecraft suggests that the contemplative and virtuous mind in both men and women is a necessary foundation for a knowledgeable citizen of a democratic society. She defends the rights of all human beings based on right reason in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. “In what does man’s pre-eminence over the brute creation consist?” she asks. Her answer “is as clear as that a half is less than the whole; in Reason” (12). Reasonable human beings may obtain the individual and political liberty that both Milton and Wollstonecraft espouse. Wollstonecraft asserts

⁴¹ In Virgil’s *Aenied*, Mezentius, the Etruscan king, “He even tied corpses to living bodies, as a means / of torture, placing hand on hand and face against face, / so killing by a lingering death, in that wretched / embrace, that ooze of disease and decomposition” (8.485-88). See chapter two.

consequently the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society: and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow is equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed correctly. (12)

Wollstonecraft realizes that full political participation for women in a self-governing society relies on their access to an equal education.

For all her resistance to Milton, Wollstonecraft, like her female predecessors, relies on his ideology of virtue through right reason to redefine virtue for women in the waning years of the eighteenth century. Her definition of virtue for women, however, expands to complete social and political independence. In the introduction to her *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft writes,

Independence I have long considered as the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue – and independence I will ever secure by contracting my wants, though I were to live on a barren heath. (3)

Wollstonecraft demands independence of thought for women at all costs, for her desire for political liberty relies on the morality of individual citizens. She advocates for equal intellectual rights for women based on the need for them to be responsible members of society. She states that

it is then an affection for the whole human race that makes my pen dart rapidly along to support what I believe to be the cause of virtue: and the same motive leads me earnestly to wish to see woman place in a station in which she would advance, instead of retarding, the progress of those glorious principles that give substance to morality. (*Vindication for the Rights of Woman* 3)

Wollstonecraft desired for women to be full participants in the liberty that the world was beginning to realize at the end of the eighteenth century. She could not have proposed equality and independence, however, without the work of the women who shaped the notion of a contemplative, virtuous woman in the hundred years before her.

These women found a paradise within that subsequently radiated external, valorous acts. Helen Wishart and Viki Soady point out that

in the future, it would appear, women could also be defined by the existent patriarchal criteria of economic clout and the rights that she could wrest from, and therefore, claim within society – male virtues valorized in male terms – the usual list of activities in accordance with virtue, the aged *locus classicus*, delineated in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. (282)

Perhaps their achievement is best expressed by Mary Robinson in her *Letters* of 1799:

Since the sex has been condemned for exercising the power of speech, they have successfully taken up the pen: and their writings exemplify both energy of mind, and capability of acquiring the most extensive knowledge. The press will be the monuments from which the genius of British women will rise to immortal celebrity: their works will, in proportion as their educations are liberal, from year to year, challenge an equal portion of fame, with the labours of their classical male contemporaries. (90-91)

My work has perpetuated their fame as I have endeavored to show how women could take the genius of Milton and use it for their advancement toward intellectual freedom.

CONCLUSION

I began this project with a studied grasp of Milton's work and very little knowledge of the women writers I chose, save those few pieces I read as part of a survey class. I knew that as I had read Mary Astell's *Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, Lady Mary Chudleigh's "The Ladies Defense," and various poems by Elizabeth Carter, I noted instances in which these writers were echoing Milton's stoic stance on frivolous activity, his views about the importance of intellectual equality in marriage, and his concept of the possibility of mental and spiritual freedom in the midst of undesirable social and political circumstances. I was also impressed with these women because of their admonition to their own sex to make changes in themselves, and not wait for politicians and preachers to change their lives for them.

Since the lack of educational opportunities and oppressive marriage laws were the two hindrances that these women had to overcome, I included their struggles and triumphs in these areas. I also believe that, even though they all read Milton as part of their self-styled educations, their engagement with the same Stoic philosophy that Milton emulated added to the examination of their ideas. My initial impression of their battle for intellectual equality and freedom evolved into a deep admiration for their personal and public successes. My first task was to read everything Astell, Chudleigh, and Carter wrote; then, I read everything I could find from other scholars who have examined their work. Although this endeavor was time-consuming, it was also rewarding. I was delighted to find traces of the virtuous path in many of their less-known works. I also felt that, if I was to represent these women, I must be acquainted with all of their work. Furthermore, I learned more about Milton's Eve. Whether Milton meant his ideas of intellectual liberty to include women is still debatable, but I found many scholars who view Eve

as a three-dimensional, complex character who transcends her failure and becomes the catalyst for redemption.

As I researched various sources, I found many more men and women who shared the sentiments that Milton and these women expressed. I chose to limit my project to those represented here, however, for two reasons: their immediate proximity to Milton's ideology and the chronological influence they had on each other. Beginning with Astell's insistence that women could overcome the stigma of Eve's transgression and moving through Chudleigh's revelations of the equality of the sexes in both failure and redemption, I landed on Carter, who represents the kind of intellectual and spiritual being that Milton says is possible through vigorous study, contemplation, divine revelation, and right reason.

I included the afterword material on Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft in an effort to demonstrate the possibilities for those who have been tutored by courageous women before them, and who made the sacrifices necessary to give them a public voice. I have also realized through this study that I must never take my position as a woman scholar for granted. Without Astell, there might never have been a Wollstonecraft. Without Chudleigh or Carter, there might never have been a Hannah More. All of our opportunities as female scholars are founded on their foresight and tenacity. Yet, not enough has been written about these women. I plan to join with other voices and use this project to further our understanding of their historic and literary importance.

WORKS CITED

- Achinstein, Sharon. "Mary Astell, Religion, and Feminism: Texts in Motion." *Mary Astell, Reason, Gender, and Faith*. Michal Michelson and William Kolbrener, editors, Routledge, 2007, pp. 17-29.
- Agorni, Mirella. "The Voice of the Translatress: From Aphra Behn to Elizabeth Carter." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 28, 1998, pp. 181-195, *JSTOR*, Accessed 20 Apr. 2017.
- "Amazed, ppl. a." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Oxford UP, 1989.
- Anon. *Female Virtues: A Poem*. London, 1787, *ECCO*, Accessed 11 Jan. 2016.
- Astell, Mary. *Bart'lemy fair: or, an enquiry after wit, in which due respect is had to a letter concerning enthusiasm, to my Lord ---. By Mr. Wotton*, London, 1709, *ECCO*, Accessed 13 Jul. 2017.
- . *The Christian Religion, as Professed by a Daughter of the Church of England*, London, 1705, *ECCO*, Accessed 17 Mar. 2016.
- . *Letters Concerning the Love of God, between the author of the proposal to the ladies and Mr. John Norris*, London, 1730, *ECCO*, Accessed 7 Mar. 2016.
- . "Preface, By a Lady: Written in 1724." Montagu, Mary Wortley, Lady. *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M—y W-----y M-----e*. 4th ed. London, 1766, pp. v-ix, *ECCO*, Accessed 10 Feb. 2016.
- . *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, edited by Patricia Springborg, Broadview Press Ltd., 2002, pp. 49-126.
- . *Some reflections upon marriage. With additions*. Third edition, London, 1706, *ECCO*, Accessed 8 Jul. 2017.
- "Astonished, ppl. a." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Oxford UP, 1989.

- Aubrey, John. "Minutes of the Life of Mr. John Milton." Kerrigan, Rumrich, and Fallon, pp. xxiii-xxx.
- Ballard, George. "Lady Chudleigh." *Memoirs of British Ladies, who have been celebrated for their writings or skill in the learned languages, arts and sciences*. London, 1775, pp. 282-86, *ECCO*, Accessed 3 Feb. 2016.
- . "Mary Astell." pp. 306-17.
- Barr, Jane. "The Vulgate Genesis and St. Jerome's Attitude to Woman." *Papers Presented to the English International Conference on Patristic Studies Held at Oxford, 1979*, edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Clarendon, 1995.
- Barton, Carol. "To Stand Upright Will Ask Thee Skill: The Pinnacle and the Paradigm." *Early modern Literary Studies*, vol. 6, issue 2, 2000, pp. 1-20, *EBSCO*, Accessed 23 Sept. 2007.
- Bennett, Joan S. "'Go': Milton's Antinomianism and the Separation Scene in *Paradise Lost*, Book 9." *PMLA*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1983, pp. 388-404, *JSTOR*, Accessed 03-04-2017.
- . "Mary Astell, Lucy Hutchinson, John Milton, and Feminist Liberation Theology." *Milton in the Age of Fish: Essays on Authorship, Text, and Terrorism*, edited by Michael Lieb and Albert C. Labriola, Duquesne UP, 2006, pp. 139—66.
- "Bloom, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, Accessed 26 July 2017.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Second Edition, Oxford UP, 1973.
- Boswell, James. *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934-50.
- Broad, Jacqueline. "Mary Astell." *British Philosophers, 1500-1799*, edited by Philip Breed Dematteis and Molly Weigel, Gale, 2002. *Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 252. Literature Resource Center*, Accessed 02 May 2017.
- . *The Philosophy of Mary Astell: An Early modern Theory of Virtue*, Oxford UP, 2015.

- Brown, Cedric. "Milton's Ludlow Masque." *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, Second Edition, Edited by Dennis Danielson, Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 25-38.
- Bryson, Cynthia B. "Mary Astell: Defender of the 'Disembodied Mind.'" *Hypatia*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1998.
- Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, translated by John King, Baker, 1979.
- Carter, Elizabeth. "Introduction." Translation, *All the Works of Epictetus*. London, 1758, *ECCO*, Accessed 29 Oct. 2017.
- . *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Montagu, between the Years 1755-1800: Chiefly upon Literary and Moral Subjects*, vol. 1, London, 1817, pp. 261-62, google.books/read, Accessed 26 Oct. 2017.
- . *Poems Upon Particular Occasions*, London, 1738, *ECCO*, Accessed 3 Oct. 2017.
- . "Integer Vitae, Scelerisque purus, &c." pp. 7-8.
- . "Whate'er we think on't, Fortune's but a Toy." pp. 15-17.
- . *Poems on Several Occasions*, 4th Edition, London, J. F. and C. Rivington, 1789, *ECCO*, Accessed 9 April 2011.
- . "A Dialogue." pp. 25-27
- . "In Diem Natalem." pp. 1-4.
- . "Ode to Melancholy." pp. 79-83.
- . "Ode to Wisdom." pp. 85-90.
- . "On the Death of Master *****." pp. 27-28.
- . "On the Death of Mrs. Rowe." Pp. 10-12.
- . "The Rambler 44." pp. 107-14.

- . "The Rambler 100." pp. 115-20.
- . "To *****." pp. 12-15.
- . "To *****." pp. 22-25.
- . "To *****." pp. 59-61.
- . "To *****." pp. 65-67.
- . "To *****." pp. 70-71.
- . "To *****. On a Watch." pp. 29-31.
- . "To *****. On a Watch." p. 56.
- . "To Miss *****. From Her Guardian Angel." pp. 45-47.
- . "To Miss *****. In Answer to the Foregoing." pp. 43-45.
- . "To Mrs. Montagu." pp. 100-103.
- . "To Mrs. Vesey." pp. 94-97.
- . "To the Earl of Bath." pp. 75-78.
- . "To the Hon. Thomas Dawson." p. 98.
- . "To the Rev. Dr. Carter." pp. 62-63.
- . "To the Same. April the 9th." pp. 18-21.
- . "To the Same: Occasioned by an Ode Written by Mrs. Phillips." pp. 15-18.
- . "While Clear the Night." pp. 5-7.
- . "While Night in Solemn Shade Invests the Pole." pp. 32-34.
- . "Written at Midnight in a Thunder Storm." pp. 36-38.
- . "Written Extempore on the Sea-Shore." pp. 38-39.

Carter, Nicholas. "A Sermon preach'd in the chapel, at Deale in Kent." 2nd Edition, London, 1752, *ECCO*, Accessed 4 Nov. 2017.

Chapone, Mrs. Hester. "To Elizabeth Carter." *Letters on the improvement of the mind. Addressed to a young lady. To which are added, miscellanies in prose and verse*, Third edition, vol. 2., Dublin, 1777, *ECCO*, Accessed 26 Oct. 2017.

"Cherubim. n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, Accessed 26 July 2017.

"chimerical, adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, Accessed 26 July 2017.

Chudleigh, Mary. "Of Knowledge," *Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*, Edited by Margaret J. Ezell, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 251-61. *ProQuest ebrary*, Accessed. 3 February 2016.

---. "Of Pride," Ezell, pp. 261-68.

---. "Of Solitude," Ezell, pp. 385-90.

---. "The Resolution," Ezell, pp. 88-112.

---. "To the Reader," Ezell, pp. 246-50.

---. *The female preacher. Being an answer to a late rude and scandalous wedding-sermon, preach'd by Mr. John Sprint, May the 11th, at Sherburn, in Dorsetshire: wherein that Levite is expos'd as he deserves*, London, 1707, *ECCO*, Accessed 8 Apr. 2016.

---. *The ladies defence: or, The Bride-Woman's Counsellor Answer'd: a poem. In a dialogue between Sir John Brute, Sir William Loveall, Melissa, and a Parson. Written by a lady.* London : printed for John Deeve at Bernard's-Inn-Gate in Holborn, 1701, *ECCO*, Accessed 3 Feb. 2016.

---. *The Song of the Three Children Paraphras'd*. Ezell, pp. 167-241.

Clarke, Norma. "Anna Seward: Swan, Duckling or Goose?" *British Women's Writing in the Long Eighteenth Century: Authorship, Politics and History*. Edited by Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, pp. 34-47.

- . "Elizabeth Carter." *Dr. Johnson's Women*. Hambleton and London, 2000, pp. 25-66.
- "Contemplation, n." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, third edition, Oxford UP, 2011.
- "Contemple, n." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, third edition, Oxford UP, 2011.
- Davies, Stevie. *The Feminine Reclaimed: The Idea of Woman in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton*. The University of Kentucky Press, 1986, *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 02-06-2017.
- Deluna, D. N. "Mary Astell: England's First Feminist Critic." *Women's Studies*, vol. 22, 1993, pp. 231-42. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 02-06-2017.
- Dimauro, Monica L. *Mary Chudleigh's Stoical Philosophy and Its Importance for Women*, Dissertation, University of Connecticut, 2012. *ProQuest*, Accessed 13 Aug. 2017.
- "Discursive, adj." *Oxford English Dictionary*, third edition, 2013.
- Dobranski, Stephen B. "Milton's Social Life." *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, Second Edition, Edited by Dennis Danielson, Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 1-24.
- Doloff, Mathew K. *Meditating the Muse: Milton and the Metamorphoses of Urania*. Dissertation, University of Texas Austin, 2006.
- Dorr, Priscilla. "Elizabeth Carter." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 5, no.1, 1986, pp. 138-140, *JSTOR*, Accessed 9 Mar. 2011.
- Dryden, John. *The first part of Miscellany Poems*. Vol. 6, London, 1727. *ECCO*, Accessed 8 Jan. 2018.
- Duran, Jane. "Christianity and Women's Education: Anna Maria van Schurman and Mary Astell." *Philosophy and Theology*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2014, pp. 3-18. *Georgia State University RAPID*, Accessed 06-06-2017.
- Eger, Elizabeth and Lucy Peltz, eds. *Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings*, Yale UP, 2008.

Eliot, T. S. "Milton." *The Suwanee Review*, vol. 56, no. 2, 1948, pp. 185-209, *JSTOR*, Accessed 6 Apr. 2017.

---. "Milton I." *Essays and Studies of the English Language Association*, Oxford UP, 1936.

"enthusiasm, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, Accessed 26 July 2017.

Epictetus. *Epictetus his morals, with Simplicius his comment*, Made English from the Greek by George Stanhope, London, 1704, *ECCO*, Accessed 13 Aug. 2017.

Erickson, Robert A. "Milton and the Poetics of Ecstasy in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Fiction." *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, Edited by Paula A. Backscheider and Catherine Inrassia, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005, pp. 117-39.

Evans, J. Martin. *The Miltonic Moment*. Kentucky UP, 1998.

Fairer, David. "Creating a National Poetry: the Tradition of Spenser and Milton." *Sitter* 177-202.

Fenton, Mary C. *Milton's Places of Hope: Spiritual and Political Connections of Hope with Land*. Ashgate, 2006.

Fish, Stanley. *Surprised by Sin*. Second Edition, Harvard UP, 1998.

Flannagan, Roy, editor. *The Riverside Milton*, Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Freeman, Lisa A. "A Dialogue: Elizabeth Carter's Passion for the Female Mind." *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon*, Edited by Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain, St. Martin's Press, 1999, pp. 50-63.

Goldsmith, Steven. "The Muting of Satan: Language and Redemption in *Paradise Regained*." *Studies in English Literature*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1986, pp. 125-40, *EBSCO*, Accessed 04-03-2017.

- Griffin, Dustin. *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Grogan, Claire. "Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More: Politics, Feminism and Modern Critics." *Lumen*, vol. 13, pp. 99-108. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 10 Dec. 2017.
- Guest, Harriet. "Bluestocking Feminism." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. ½, 2002, pp. 59-80, *JSTOR*, Accessed 4 Oct. 2017.
- Gwinnett, Richard. "Pylades and Corinna: or memoirs of the lives, amours, and writings of Richard Gwinnett, Esq." vols. 1 and 2, London, 1717, *ECCO*, Accessed 31 Jul. 2017.
- Hampshire, Gwen, Editor. *Elizabeth Carter, 1717-1806: An Edition of Some Unpublished Letters*. University of Delaware Press, 2005.
- Havens, Raymond Dexter. *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*, Harvard UP, 1922.
- Hays, Mary. *Female Biography; Or, memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of all Ages and Countries*, vol. II, R. Phillips, 1803, pp. 213-22.
- Hawley, Judith. "Elizabeth Carter and the Modes of Knowledge." *Woman to Woman*, Edited by Carolyn D. Williams, Louise Ducking, and Angela Escott, University of Delaware Press, 2010, pp. 157-70, rpt. In *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, Edited by Lawrence J. Trudeau, vol. 277, *Literature Resource Center*, Accessed 26 Aug. 2017.
- Held, Joshua R. "Eve's 'Paradise Within' in *Paradise Lost*: A Stoic Mind, a Love Sonnet, and a Good Conscience." *Studies in Philology*, vol. 114, no. 1, 2017, pp. 171-196.
- Hicks, Philip. "Women Worthies and Feminist Argument in Eighteenth-Century Britain." *Women's History Review*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2015, pp. 174-90. *Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group*, Accessed 01-06-2017.

- Hill, Bridget. *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England*. Routledge, 2005.
- Hume, Patrick. *Annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost*. London, 1695, *EEBO*, Accessed 13 Feb. 2016.
- Huntington, Tuley Francis, Editor. *Milton's L'allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus and Lycidas*. Boston, 1904.
- Johnson, Claudia L., editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Johnson, Samuel. *A Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. 1, second edition, London, 1755-56, *ECCO*, Accessed 26 July 2017.
- . "The Vanity of Human Wishes," *The Major Works*, Edited by Donald Greene, Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 12-21.
- Jones, Vivien. "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Literature of Advice and Instruction." Johnson, pp. 119-140.
- Juvenal, *Satire 10: The Vanity of Human Wishes*, translated by G. G. Ramsay, *The Tertullian Project*, www.TertullianProject.org, Accessed 12 Jan. 2017.
- Kerrigan, William, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon, Editors. *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, Random House, Inc., 2007.
- Keymer, Thomas. "Wollstonecraft and Milton on Divorce." *Notes and Queries*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2010, pp. 563-65. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 26 Nov. 2017.
- Kinnaird, Joan K. "Mary Astell and the Conservative Contribution to English Feminism." *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1979, pp. 53-75, *JSTOR*, Accessed 18 Jul. 2017.

- Knedlik, Janet Leslie. "Fancy, Faith, and Generative Mimesis in *Paradise Lost*." *Modern Language Quarterly: A Journal of Literary History*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1986, pp. 19-47, EBSCO, Accessed 03-04-2017.
- Lewalski, Barbara Kiefer. *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms*. Princeton UP, 2014.
- . *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography*, Revised Edition, Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Lyttleton, Lord George. "On Reading Mrs. Carter's Poems in Manuscript." Reprinted in *Poems Upon Particular Occasions*, Elizabeth Carter, London, 1738, pp. v – vi, ECCO, Accessed 16 Oct. 2017.
- Lonsdale, Roger, Editor. *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, Oxford UP, 1989.
- Magrath, Jane. "Rags of Immortality: Negotiating the Body in the Bluestocking Letters." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 65, no. 1/2, 2002, pp. 235-56, JSTOR, Accessed 9 Mar. 2011.
- Manton, Thomas. *A Practical Commentary or an Exposition with Notes on the Epistle of S' Jude*. 2nd edition, London, 1662, EEBO, Accessed 2 Apr. 2007.
- Marlowe, Christopher. *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*. The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B., The Sixteenth Century and the Early Seventeenth Century, Eighth Edition, Stephen Greenblatt, General Editor, W. W. Norton and Co., 2006, pp. 1023-55.
- Martin, Reginald. "Elizabeth Carter: Found Poet of the 18th Century." *Publications of the Arkansas Philological Association (PAPA)*, vol. 11, no.2, 1985, pp. 49-64, MLA International Bibliography, Accessed 9 Mar. 2011.

- McColley, Diane Kelsey. "Free Will and Obedience in the Separation Scene of *Paradise Lost*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 12, no. 1, The English Renaissance, 1972, pp. 103-120, *JSTOR*, Accessed 03-04-2017.
- Magrath, Jane. "Rags of Immortality: Negotiating the Body in the Bluestocking Letters." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 65, no. 1/2, 2002, pp. 235-56, *JSTOR*, Accessed 9 Mar. 2011.
- McGrath, Patrick J. "Formal Resistance: Gender Hierarchy and Eve's Final Speech in *Paradise Lost*." *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 47, no.2, 2013, pp. 72-87, *EBSCO*, Accessed 2 Feb. 2016.
- McInnes, Andrew. "Wollstonecraft's Legion: Feminism in Crisis, 1799." *Women's Writing*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2013, pp. 479-95, *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 8 Dec. 2017.
- Miller, Shannon. "Disruptive Partners: Milton and Seventeenth-century Women Writers." *The New Milton Criticism*, edited by Peter C. Herman, Elizabeth Sauer, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 156-74.
- . *Engendering the Fall: John Milton and Seventeenth-Century Women Writers*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- Milton, John. *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*, Kerrigan, Rumrich, Fallon, pp. 64-98.
- . From *An Apology for Smectymnuus*. Kerrigan, Rumrich, Fallon, pp. 845-56.
- . *Areopagitica*. Kerrigan, Rumrich, Fallon, pp. 927-66.
- . *Eikonoklastes*. *The Prose Works of John Milton*. London: Westley and Davis, Stationers Court, 1835, *EBBO*, pp. 271-337. Accessed 2 Apr. 2007.
- . *Lycidas and Other Poems*, edited by A. W. Verity, Cambridge, 1918.
- . *Of Education*. Kerrigan, Rumrich, Fallon, pp. 967-81.
- . "On Time." Kerrigan, Rumrich, Fallon, pp. 59-50.

- . *Paradise Lost*. Kerrigan, Rumrich, Fallon, pp. 291-630.
- . *Prolusion VII*. Kerrigan, Rumrich, Fallon, pp. 793-804.
- . *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. Kerrigan, Rumrich, Fallon, pp. 853-921.
- . *The Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelaty. The Prose Works of John Milton*.
London: Westley and Davis, Stationers Court, 1835, pp. 28-54, Accessed 2 Apr. 2007.
- Moore, Edward. "Plotinus." *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, St. Elias School of
Orthodox Theology, www.iep.utm.edu, Accessed 05-05-2017.
- More, Hannah. *Cheap Repository: The Sorrows of Yamba; Or, the Negro Woman's Lamentation*.
London, 1795, *ECCO*, Accessed 18 Feb. 2017.
- . *Essays on Various Subjects, principally designed for young ladies*, Fourth Edition, London,
1785, *ECCO*, Accessed 18 Feb. 2017.
- . "On the danger of Sentimental or Romantic Connexions." *The Works of Miss Hannah More
in Prose and Verse*, London, 1789, pp. 45-61, *ECCO*, Accessed 18 Feb. 2017.
- . *Slavery, a Poem*, Lonsdale, pp. 330-31.
- . *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, with a view of the principles and
conduct prevalent among women of rank and fortune*, Volume 1, Eighth Edition, London,
1800, *ECCO*, Accessed 18 Feb. 2017.
- . "The Gin Shop; Or, a Peep into a Prison." London, 1795, *ECCO*, Accessed 8 Mar. 2017.
- Nath, Prem, "Johnson Agonistes And Milton's Samson." *American Notes And Queries*, Vol. 20,
Issue 5-6, 1982: pp. 69-71. *MLA International Bibliography*, Web, Accessed 27 Jan.
2017.
- Norris, John. "Preface." *Letters Concerning the Love of God, between the author of the proposal
to the ladies and Mr. John Norris*, London, 1730, *ECCO*, Accessed 7 Mar. 2016.

- Norton, Mary F, "The Praxis of Milton's Truth: Proairesis and Qualification in the Civil Liberty Tracts." *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 28, no.3, 1994, pp. 47-56, *EBSCO*. Accessed 2 Feb. 2008.
- Ovid, *Fasti*, Second edition, Translation by Thomas Keightley, London, Whitaker & Co., Ava Maria Lane, 1848.
- The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, edited by Ted Honderich, Oxford UP, 1995.
- Parker, Julie Faith. "Blaming Eve Alone: Translation, Omission, and Implications of עַמֵּן in Genesis 3:6b." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 132, no. 4, 2013, pp. 729-47, *JSTOR*, Accessed 10-06-2017.
- Pennington, Rev. Montague. "Biographical Sketch of Elizabeth Carter." *The Belfast Monthly Magazine*, vol. 12, no.66, 1814, pp. 27-35, *JSTOR*, Accessed 10 Apr. 2016.
- Perry, Ruth. "Radical Doubt and the Liberation of Women." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1985, pp. 472-93. *JSTOR*, Accessed 18 Jul. 2017.
- . *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist*, University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- . "Two Forgotten Wits." *The Antioch Review*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1981, pp. 431-38. *JSTOR*, Accessed 18 Jul. 2017.
- "Philosophic, a." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Oxford UP, 1989.
- "Pinion, n." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Oxford UP, 1989.
- Plunknett, Theodore F. T. *A Concise History of the Common Law*. 5th edition, Little, Brown and Company, 1956.
- Pope, Alexander. "Satire IV. Versified." *The Works of Alexander Pope Esq.*, vol. IV, Dublin, 1752, *ECCO*, Accessed 8 Nov. 2017.
- Price, Bronwen. "'In Once Harmonious Song Combine': Inclusiveness, Toleration, and Liberty in Lady Mary Chudleigh's The Song of the Three Children Paraphras'd." *The Journal of*

the English Association, vol. 62, no. 237, 2013, pp. 193-213, *MLA International Bibliography*, Accessed 10 Sept. 2016.

"Proairesis, n." *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition, Oxford, 2012.

Raleigh, Walter Alexander, Sir. *Milton*. Edward Arnold, 1905.

Reynolds, Myra. "Elizabeth Carter." *The Learned Lady in England 1650-1760*. Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1920, pp. 255-57.

---. "Lady Chudleigh." pp. 147-50.

Robinson, Mary. *A letter to the women of England, on the injustice of mental subordination*. London, 1799, *ECCO*, Accessed 13 Dec. 2017.

Rogers, John, Lecture, "Introduction: Milton, Power, and the Power of Milton." Yale University, 2007.

Rovira, James. "Gathering the Scattered Body of Milton's *Areopagitica*." *Renascence*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2005, pp. 87-102, *EBSCO*, Accessed 04-03-2017.

Scodel, Joshua. "Edenic Freedoms." *Milton Studies*, 2015, pp. 153-200, Accessed 03-05-2017.

Scott, Mary. *The Female Advocate: a Poem*. London, 1775, *ECCO*, Accessed 31 Jul. 2017.

"Seraphic, adj." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1989.

Shiells, Robert. "The lives of the poets of Great Britain and Ireland, to the time of Dean Swift." Vol. 3, London, 1753, *ECCO*, Accessed 31 Jul. 2017.

Shullenberger, William, "Wrestling with the Angel: *Paradise Lost* and Feminist Criticism." *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1986, pp. 69-85. Reprinted in *John Milton: Twentieth-Century Perspectives*, Vol. 4, *Paradise Lost*, Edited by J. Martin Evans, Routledge, 2003, pp. 269-85.

- Sidney, Sir Philip, "An Apology for Poetry." *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, 3rd edition, Edited by David H. Richter, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007, pp. 135-59.
- Sitter, John, Ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, Cambridge UP, 2001.
- Smyth, Maura Josephine. "Narrating Originality in *Paradise Lost*." *SEL*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2013, pp. 137-55, *Project Muse*, Accessed 28 Mar. 2017.
- Springborg, Patricia, Introduction. *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, pp. 9-41.
- . *Mary Astell: Theorist of Freedom from Domination*. Cambridge UP, 2015, *eBook Collection, EBSCOhost*, Accessed 26 July 2016.
- Stevenson, Keira. "Mary Wollstonecraft." Great Neck Publishing, 2017, pp. 1-2, *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 20 Dec. 2017.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, Harper and Row, 1977.
- Strong, James. *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville, 2001.
- Stroup, Thomas B. *Religious Rite and Ceremony in Milton's Poetry*. The University Press of Kentucky, 2015.
- Stuart, Lady Louisa. "Introductory Anecdotes 1837." *Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (1893), 1:49-121. *Spenser and the Tradition: English Poetry 1579-1830*, compiled by David Hill Radcliffe, www.spenserians.cath.vt.edu, Accessed 05 Jul. 2017.
- Swaim, Kathleen M, "The Art of the Maze in Book IX of *Paradise Lost*." *SEL*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1972, pp.129-40, *JSTOR*, Accessed 3 May 2010.

- Taylor, Barbara. "The Religious Foundations of Mary Wollstonecraft's Feminism." Johnson, pp. 99-118.
- "Templum, n." *Cassell's Latin and English Dictionary*. Compiled by D. P. Simpson, Macmillan Publishing, 1987.
- "Tempus, n." *Cassell's Latin and English Dictionary*. Compiled by D. P. Simpson, Macmillan Publishing, 1987.
- Thomas, Claudia. "Samuel Johnson and Elizabeth Carter: Pudding, Epictetus, and the Accomplished Woman." *South Central Review*, vol. 9, no. 4, *Johnson and Gender*, 1992, pp. 18-30, *JSTOR*, Accessed 20 Apr. 2017.
- Thomas, Elizabeth. "Miscellany poems in several subjects." London, 1722, *ECCO*, Accessed 31 Jul. 2017.
- Timpson, Reverend Thomas. *BRITISH FEMALE BIOGRAPHY, BEING Select Memoirs of Pious Ladies, IN VARIOUS RANKS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE*, London, 1854, Google Books, Accessed 3 Nov. 2017.
- Verity, A. W., Editor, *Milton's Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, L'allegro, Il Penseroso, and Lycidas*, Cambridge, 1918.
- Vogel, Dan. "Eve – The First Feminist: John Milton's Midrash on Genesis 3:6." *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2012, pp. 19-24, *EBSCO*, Accessed 12 Mar. 2016.
- Wallace, Jennifer. "Confined and Exposed: Elizabeth Carter's Classical Translations." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2003, pp. 315-34, *JSTOR*, Accessed 27 Aug. 2017.
- Walpole, Horace. *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, vol. 3, 1765, *ECCO*, Accessed 14 Nov. 2017.

- Weiss, Penny A. "Mary Astell: Including Women's Voices in Political Theory." *Hypatia*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2004, pp. 63-84, *JSTOR*, Accessed 18 Jul. 2017.
- Williams, Thomas. Introduction, Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, Hackett Publishing Co., 1993, pp. xi-xix.
- Williamson, Marilyn L. *Raising Their Voices: British Women Writers, 1650-1750*. Wayne State UP, 1990.
- Wilmot, John, "Satyr Against Reason and Mankind," Edited and annotated b Jack Lynch, [www.Andromeda Rutgers.edu](http://www.Andromeda.Rutgers.edu), Accessed 12 Jan. 2017.
- Wishart, Helen and Viki Soady. "Feminist Emancipatory Discourse from Astell's 'Hog-Tending' through de Beauvoir's 'Complicity' to Nussbaum's 'Human Capabilities.'" *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 6, 1999, pp. 281-90, *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 8 Dec. 2017.
- Wittreich, Joseph Anthony, *Feminist Milton*. Cornell UP, 1987.
- Wolfe, Don M. Ed. *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*. Yale UP, 1953.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*. London, 1794, *ECCO*, Accessed 30 Nov. 2017.
- . *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*. New York, 1975.
- . *Mary. A Fiction*. London, 1788. *ECCO*, Accessed 30 Nov. 2017.
- . *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, London, 1787, *ECCO*, Accessed 30 Nov. 2017.
- . *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, Second edition, London, 1790, *ECCO*, Accessed 30 Nov. 2017.

Zwierlein, Anne-Julia, "'Betrayed My Credulous Innocence': Mendacity and Female Education in John Milton and the 'Battle of the Sexes.'" *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2015, pp. 204-19, *Florida Atlantic University*, Accessed 4 Jan. 2016.