EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES

A Tragic Hero in Epic: Satan's Relapse into *Hamlet*'s 'Problems' in *Paradise Lost*

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Introduction

This paper reconsiders the infamous 'problems' of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – namely, 'Hamlet's madness, his delay, Gertrude's questionable knowledge of the murder, and so forth'[1] – through Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Theodor W. Adorno's conception of the emergent self and Rachel Eisendrath's understanding of aesthetic form, where '[e]arlier stages of a process of thought are not sloughed off by its [the text's] result but are, crucially, retained within it'.[2] For the disintegrationists, *Hamlet* 'would become a layered text resulting from a multistep process of revision, with Shakespeare altering and incorporating the work of several playwrights'.[3] While the goal of the disintegrationists was 'disintegrating *Hamlet* into its component parts… to identify the higher values that Shakespeare brought to the drama, which raised "the tone of his play above all versions of the story" and set his tragedy "above the many others of personal revenge… in a class entirely by itself"',[4] I argue that *Hamlet* is, rather, a distinct marker of the aesthetic as process, specifically, during a time when the revenge tragedy as a genre was, as I will show, becoming outmoded. John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, another canonical

This paper is dedicated to Dr. Andrew Sargent. I am grateful for his passionate response when I first proposed this article to him, as well as the written communication he sent me regarding his thoughts on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. I also wish to thank Dr. Melinda Gough (Professor of English and Cultural Studies, McMaster University) for reading a draft of this article and providing helpful comments.

[1] Zachary Lesser, 'Conscience Makes Cowards: The Disintegration and Reintegration of Shakespeare', in Hamlet *After Q1: An Uncanny History of the Shakespearean Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 157-206 (p. 176).

[2] Rachel Eisendrath, 'The Long Nightwatch: Augustine, *Hamlet*, and the Aesthetic', *English Literary History* 87.3 (2020), 581-606 (pp. 598-9).

[3] Lesser, p. 173. The disintegrationists' work thrived from the 1890s through the 1920s.

[4] Ibid., p. 177; Crawford qtd.

work, is instructive here, as it deals explicitly with genre: the transition from pagan epic to Christian epic (put differently, from the physical to the spiritual).[5] In particular, I suggest that Shakespeare's Hamlet is linked to Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* because both characters are 'problematic' insofar as they find themselves in 'the wrong story',[6] as markers of the aesthetic *as* process.[7] The distintegrationists sought to locate 'certain vestigial traits… in the descent of the play' and, in so doing, explain their otherwise inexplicable presence in *Hamlet*.[8] I suggest, however, that these vestigial traits – found in *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost* – are included for a specific reason: they demand comparison between an outmoded genre and an emerging one through characters that represent the genres. Laertes and Satan represent the revenge tragedy hero, while Hamlet and Adam and Eve represent the epic hero.[9]

In literary transformation, older versions of a work are retained rather than cast off, so that we are left with a palimpsestic text – that is, 'more than one text is experienced – and knowingly so'[10] – whose layers can tell us about the aesthetic process leading up to, and including, this text's cultural moment.[11] For critics like Harold Bloom, however, *Hamlet* is *the* cultural moment: 'Hamlet is to other literary and dramatic characters what Shakespeare is to other writers: a class of one, set apart by cognitive and aesthetic

[5] In contrast to the pagan epic, whose song partakes in the 'middle flight' (1.14), for it does not soar 'above the Olympian hill' (7.3), Milton's argument is so lofty that it is 'sufficient of itself to raise / That name [of Christian epic]' (9.43-4). See John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). All subsequent references to the poem are from this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text by book and line number(s). It is worth noting what *Paradise Lost* has in common with Homer and Virgil; for example, the epic features some acknowledgement of virtue regarding the classical hero.

[6] Michael Neill, '*Hamlet*: A Modern Perspective', in *Hamlet* (updated ed.), ed. by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), pp. 319-38 (p. 337). For Harold Bloom, 'Hamlet would always be in the wrong play, but then he already is'; see Harold Bloom, '*Hamlet*', in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), pp. 383-431 (p. 385).

[7] For Neill, Hamlet is stuck in 'a hoary old revenge tragedy' (p. 337).

[8] Lesser, p. 175.

[9] I should stress, however, that some characters, such as the titular Hamlet, straddle the line between genres.

[10] Linda Hutcheon, 'HOW? (Audiences)', in *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 113-39 (p. 116).

[11] Literary transformation was especially prominent during the early modern period. Richard Meek notes 'the Renaissance practice of imitation, in which reproducing the work of others can lead to imaginative transformation'; see Richard Meek, '"For by the Image of My Cause, I See / The Portraiture of His": *Hamlet* and the Imitation of Emotion', in *'Hamlet' and Emotions*, ed. by Paul Megna, Bríd Phillips, and R.S. White (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2019), pp. 81-108 (p. 100).

eminence'.[12] To view Hamlet and Shakespeare as (as it were) untouchable, though, is to neglect intertextuality, as well as relations between texts, which *Hamlet* does not exclude.[13] In fact, Jonathan Bate's *How the Classics Made Shakespeare* points out that because '[i]t is always easier for a scholar to be "original" by positing a "hitherto unknown obscure source" than by remaining focused on the common currency of the canonical figures who shaped a tradition – in our case, most notably Cicero, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, and Seneca' – 'certain aspects of Shakespeare's classical inheritance have been… neglected'.[14] Building on Eisendrath's claim that 'the play [*Hamlet*] points toward a coherence that lies, paradoxically, beyond the play itself'[15] and Curtis Perry's assertion that 'what Shakespeare does in *Hamlet* is better understood as part of a complex intertextual conversation than as an isolated lightning strike of appropriative genius',[16] I will show that this coherence lies in a future literary work – in this case, *Paradise Lost* – that can better, but never completely because literature is process, contain that coherence. À la Immanuel Kant, Eisendrath suggests, '*Hamlet* implicitly defines its own principles of tragedy, and thereby, by its very existence, retroactively changes what we mean by tragedy. The aesthetic, then, as a philosophical category is always changing, even in the act of reaching for its own stable definition or closure'.[17] *Paradise Lost*'s transformative

[12] Bloom, pp. 412-3. Moreover, Curtis Perry notes that beginning during the mid-eighteenth century 'the idea of Shakespeare as the representative poet of modernity [emerged]'; see Curtis Perry, *Shakespeare and Senecan Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 11.

[13] According to Perry, this neglect is exactly what has happened in literary criticism: 'The special status that *Hamlet* has accrued, as the paradigmatic postromantic tragedy of thought, has encouraged critics to treat it as *sui generis*' (p. 81). Perry lists Johann Gottfried Herder, August Wilhelm Schlegel, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge as examples of critics who have singled out Shakespeare and posited his 'freedom from classical form' (and virtually all predecessors) (p. 12). Perry's book helps us '[recognize] Senecan intertexts for Shakespeare' (p. 15). My aim is, in part, to illustrate *Hamlet*'s relationship to another canonical text: *Paradise Lost*.

[14] Jonathan Bate, *How the Classics Made Shakespeare* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 12. Further, as Perry contends, literary influence should no longer be thought of as a zero-sum game: 'Seneca or Ovid? But it now seems obvious that the answer… should be both/and rather than either/or' (p. 2).

[15] Eisendrath, p. 595.

[16] Perry, p. 81. In his book, Perry argues that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* might be understood specifically 'as a canny update of Senecan tragedy', a form which 'is radically psychological in focus when compared to its ancient Greek counterparts' (pp. 78 and 20). While Perry proposes to 'think about what in the premodern Senecan tradition makes *Hamlet* so receptive to modern critical appropriation' and conducts his analysis through comparison of 'parallel texts' – that is, texts 'exploring closely related matters in suggestively different, innovative ways' – such as *Hamlet* and John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, I focus, instead, on two canonical texts that demonstrate the aesthetic as process (pp. 101 and 86). That is, in my comparison of *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost*, I see linearity and intertextual conversation rather than parallelism, which is more isolating.

[17] Eisendrath, p. 597.

reading of *Hamlet is* this process in action. Specifically, Satan's tragic template is a throwback to the secular revenge hero, which is in the process of being outmoded by the Christian epic heroism that Adam and Eve represent.[18] There is a kind of chasm between Hamlet and Satan: Hamlet's incongruity with his setting looks forward to a more advanced, introspective (in a word, 'modern') kind of tragic heroism but which his secular world – the morally ambiguous Ghost and 'utterly unproductive' Augustinian use of soliloquy, where '*no*thing arrives from either within or without to relieve the characters of the claustrophobia of the self'[19] – is unable to accommodate,[20] and Satan's incongruity with his setting looks back to a heroism being superseded and which is now become tragic.[21] Further, Milton's constellation with Shakespeare *ex post facto* claims a kind of Christianity in *Hamlet*.[22]

Hamlet is in 'the wrong story' because, as we will see, the secular world of revenge tragedy is unable to accommodate his need to act morally and the desire for his story to be 'told' (better suited to epic), whereas Satan is in 'the wrong story' because the spiritual world of Christian epic is unable to accommodate his backward, revengeful heroism. While I do not agree with T.S. Eliot's infamous claim that *Hamlet* is 'an artistic failure', he rightly asserts that the play 'will appear to us very differently if, instead of treating the

[18] Elsewhere, I argue that "Milton's poem transforms the traditional militant heroes of epic into relational heroes – heroism is in steadfast faith and love of God – with multiple characters demonstrating this kind of heroism, and Adam and Eve exemplifying a different kind and degree of this heroism, in that their heroism is only a potential until after the Fall, when they learn how to be fully heroic in an imperfect world"; see chapter 3, pp. 187-265, in Christina Wiendels, *God and Humanity in John Milton's* Paradise Lost. 2022. McMaster U, PhD dissertation (p. 39).

[19] Eisendrath, pp. 595 and 594.

[20] For Bloom, Shakespearean drama is itself 'a wholly secular context' (p. 385).

[21] Emily R. Wilson views epic and tragedy as competing genres *and* narratives in *Paradise Lost*: tragedy corresponds to the perspective of the human characters, while epic corresponds to the perspective of the heavenly characters. She also agrees with other critics that the poem is comprised of many genres, including epic, pastoral, history, romance, and tragedy; see Emily R. Wilson, *Mocked with Death: Tragic Overliving from Sophocles to Milton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 167. I, however, see a process of transitioning from one genre into the next in a single narrative that contains both tragedy and epic. Further, this process is part of a much larger project – one that spans authors, texts, and literary time periods – to trace the aesthetic as process, and to do so deliberately.

[22] Compare with Perry, whose aim is '[t]o clarify what in Seneca is occluded [in *Hamlet*] as a result of romantic-era hostility to Roman drama as inorganic imitation [of Greek tragedy]' (p. 13); also see Perry, p. 11, for more about mid-eighteenth-century philhellenism. Importantly, Perry shows that, contrary to common opinion, Roman drama contains so-called 'modern' elements: 'Senecan tragedy is ostentatiously interested in citation and imitation too… Senecan plays thematize and foreground their own imitative nature via sophisticated, metadramatic allusion to earlier Roman texts, and they invite their audience members likewise to perform a kind of ongoing, recursive intertextual analysis' (p. 13). I argue that Shakespeare, just like Seneca, was innovatively imitative.

whole action… as due to Shakespeare's design, I perceive *Hamlet* to be superimposed upon much cruder material which persists even in the final form'.[23] I read this 'cruder material' as essential to our understanding of the aesthetic as a form in flux rather than an extraneous element simply 'left in' or unassimilated. In a similar vein, Michael Neill argues, 'Over the sensationalism and rough energy of a conventional revenge plot is placed a sophisticated psychological drama whose most intense action belongs to the interior world of soliloquy… It is as if two plays are occurring simultaneously'.[24] In contrast to Eliot, but like Neill, for Bloom, 'Shakespeare's problem was less that of placing his Hamlet in an inadequate context than of showing a subtler Hamlet inside a grosser one… The second or revisionary Hamlet is not a dweller in an inadequate vehicle, but he is at least two beings at once: a folkloric survivor and a contemporary of Montaigne's'.[25] So, for Neill, two plays are occurring at once, while for Bloom, two Hamlets are present at once. In my reading, however, two literary *genres* are happening at once: the revenge tragedy hero is in the process of being outmoded by the epic hero.

Hamlet's Introspective, Tragic Heroism

In the chasm between Hamlet and Satan, Hamlet's incongruity with his setting looks forward to a more advanced, introspective kind of tragic heroism but which his secular world is unable to accommodate,[26] so that he finds himself at a dead-end, where he can neither carry out violent revenge nor escape the revenge plot completely.[27] For example, the fighting imagery in Hamlet's musings is turned inward, toward himself – that is, in physical violence: '(A thought which, quartered, hath but one part / wisdom / And ever three parts coward)', and later, 'My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!' (4.4.44-6, 69) – rather than outward, toward another. Thoughts, rather than actions, are 'bloody' for Hamlet. Indeed, the famous crux regarding the 'To be' speech is whether it is about taking

[23] T.S. Eliot, 'Hamlet and His Problems (1919)', in *Selected Essays* (new ed.) (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1950), pp. 121-6 (pp. 123 and 122). Eliot argues that just like how Shakespeare is baffled when he confronts his artistic problem, Hamlet's disgust is in excess of his mother (see p. 125).

[24] Neill, p. 321.

[25] Bloom, p. 392.

[26] For Bloom, '[Hamlet's] world is the growing inner self', which is neither secular nor religious but transcendental and sublime (p. 405) – in a word, proto-Romantic.

[27] As early as Act 2, Hamlet expresses that he feels trapped, telling his boyhood friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that 'Denmark's a prison', and the world is as well, for 'there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o' th' worst' (2.2.262, 264-6). See William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (updated ed.), ed. by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2012). All subsequent references to the play are from this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text by act, scene, and line number(s).

vengeance or committing suicide. In this soliloquy, Hamlet notes how the healthy, rosy hue of resolution becomes sickly and pale with the shade of thought:

> For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
> Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
> When he himself might his quietus make
> With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
> To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
> But that the dread of something after death,
> The undiscovered country from whose bourn
> No traveler returns, puzzles the will
> And makes us rather bear those ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of?
> Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pitch and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry
> And lose the name of action. (3.1.78-96)

According to Hamlet, just as the 'undiscovered country' (death) makes us bear the ills of life rather than commit suicide, so great enterprises are foregone when thought deters us from a planned course of action ('currents turn awry'). The play's most characteristically modern moment possibly has suicide as its referent, which might formally reflect the suicidal quality of reflection itself. Notably, *Paradise Lost* also refers to suicide, but only *after* the Fall. Eve, like Hamlet, contemplates suicide, but Adam, whose 'more attentive mind' laboured toward hope (10.1011), quickly rejects this response to fallen life on earth:

> No more be mentioned then of violence
> Against ourselves, and wilful barrenness,
> That cuts us off from hope, and savours only
> Rancour and pride, impatience and despite,
> Reluctance against God and his just yoke
> Laid on our necks. (10.1041-6)

When Eve proposes suicide, she is trying to act morally by preventing misery to others; however, her thoughts are too despairing to be ethical. Eve's thoughts on suicide result, precisely, from reflecting overmuch and, also like Hamlet, her thoughts (of death) make her face turn wan: 'so much of death her thoughts / Had entertained, as dyed her cheeks with pale' (10.1008-9). On the other hand, the metaphor of Adam and Eve as God's eager oxen who pull together on the load suggests both humility and the patience that is needed to endure the approach of death, or that 'slow-paced evil'(10.963), in the fallen world.[28] According to Adam, it would be morally wrong to scorn God's 'just yoke'. He teaches Eve that truly moral action is characterized by humility, hope, patience, and justice – the third is, as we will see, a major part of Miltonic heroism.

While for John Corbin, 'the Shakespearean element has to do almost exclusively with the reflective, imaginative, humane traits of his [Hamlet's] Portraiture',[29] I suggest that we see not only Hamlet's humaneness, but also his theologically underpinned morality, which does not find footing in *Hamlet* and, as such, it is occluded, but will find traction in *Paradise Lost*. In Act 4, Hamlet sounds like a more reflective and inquisitive Adam, who also speaks in soliloquy, when Hamlet says,

> What is a man
> If his chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
> Sure He that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and godlike reason
> To fust in us unused. (4.4.35-41)

Hamlet ponders the 'chief good' of man and then asserts that God – 'He' – gave humans reason and the ability to reflect. Hamlet wants to use his 'godlike reason', but it is rendered inaccessible to him because of his secular world.[30] Eisendrath notes that '[in] the transfer of soliloquies from the sphere of religious contemplation to that of drama',

[28] Indeed, for Wilson, 'The tragedy of Adam and Eve is a tragedy of overliving', such that even the final books (traditionally associated with catharsis) 'emphasize the misery of postlapsarian human life, the sense of loss, and the feeling that life goes on too long' (pp. 167 and 165).

[29] Qtd. in Lesser, p. 177. Lesser also pithily observes, '[Thomas] Kyd's Hamlet does most of the deeds of the play, and Shakespeare's Hamlet thinks most of the thoughts' (p. 177).

[30] Eisendrath argues that 'in *Hamlet*, we are in a different world' (p. 593). She explains, 'In Denmark, prayer is not efficacious because nothing (except maybe military might in the form of Fortinbras and perhaps, more hopefully, the last loyal friend in the form of Horatio) ever comes from outside to relieve the isolation of the self' (Eisendrath, p. 593).

where '"human speech goes out into the void and receives nothing in return"', '[t]his is not the exaltation of secular individualism… but an exploration of the problems of that individualism'.[31] In *Hamlet*, as Eisendrath also points out, 'There are no figures like Reason or God that might mediate the prince's aloneness. In contrast, the Ghost must be either internal or external – and when this line blurs, the psyche must bear all by registering the ambiguity as Hamlet's own psychic disturbance, his madness'.[32] For instance, in Act 3 Hamlet sees the Ghost, but Gertrude's response makes it clear that she does not: 'Alas, how is 't with you, / That you do bend your eye on vacancy / And with th' incorporal air do hold discourse?' (3.4.133-5). In Act 1 of the play, Hamlet deliberates about the Ghost's nature: Hamlet questions whether the Ghost is 'a spirit of health or goblin damned', whether it brings with it 'airs from heaven or blasts from / hell', and whether its intents are 'wicked or charitable', since it 'com'st in such a questionable shape' (1.4.44, 45-6, 47, 48). His repetition of the conjunction 'or' stresses ambiguity. Later, however, Hamlet ponders the possibility that the Ghost 'assume[s] a pleasing shape' to ensnare his soul:

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be a devil, and the devil hath power
> T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuses me to damn me. (2.2.627-32)

Hamlet does not seem mad here, but rather contemplative of the repercussions of his actions for personal salvation: he fears damnation. Hamlet knows that he is weak and melancholic, so he reasons that the devil might prey on these aspects of his selfhood. While for Eisendrath secular individualism has 'problems', I want to suggest that there is but one problem in *Hamlet*, and it is as follows: the lack of a 'post-secular', theological ground for a modern character who is neither secular nor religious, but cognizant of the importance of personal morality.[33]

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[31] Ibid., p. 588; Bates qtd. Eisendrath observes an important difference between the religious soliloquy and drama: 'God may be silent in a religious soliloquy, as [Catherine] Bates points out, but his existence as witness is secure. This is not necessarily so in drama, where the absence of any response to the soliloquy can evoke less the silence of a listener and more the silence of a void' (p. 604, endnote 23).

[32] Ibid., p. 586.

[33] Another example of Hamlet's concern with the importance of personal morality is seen when he tells Gertrude that he 'repent[s]' killing Polonius (3.4.194) and, further, that he accepts heaven's punishment for his actions; see 3.4.193-8. By contrast, in Saxo Grammaticus's the *Historica Danica*, Amleth (Hamlet's equivalent), '[f]eeling a lump beneath his feet [in the straw],… drove his sword into the spot, and impaled

When Marcellus, an otherwise somewhat minor character in *Hamlet*, says the famous line, 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark' (1.4.100), his choice of word – 'rotten' – suggests that amorality is a particular problem. In extended senses, the word 'rotten' means '[m]orally, socially, or politically corrupt; characterized by lack of integrity or moral virtue; wicked, dishonest'.[34] Further, that this line is said in the first act sets the stage for a play which is deeply concerned with ethics.[35] Indeed, critics have drawn a definitive (albeit vague) connection between Hamlet and ethical action: Linda Charnes observes, 'If nothing else, we know that Hamlet stands for Big Ideas, especially ideas that rebel against corruption of some kind'.[36] In contrast to one of its source texts, Saxo Grammaticus's *Historica Danica* (1180-1208), where Denmark does not believe Feng's (Claudius's equivalent) lies about his brother mistreating his wife, and thus Denmark knows that Feng killed his brother, in *Hamlet* Denmark thinks that Hamlet Sr's death was

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him who lay hid… Then, cutting his body into morsels, he seethed it in boiling water, and flung it through the mouth of an open sewer for the swine to eat, bestrewing the stinking mire with his hapless limbs'; see Saxo Grammaticus, '*Historica Danica*', in *William Shakespeare's* Hamlet*: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. by Robert S. Miola (New York: Norton and Company, 2019), pp. 207-15 (p. 211). Saxo's Amleth is evidently without remorse. Regarding Shakespeare's religious sentiments, Bloom emphasizes ambiguity, arguing that *Hamlet* is 'neither Christian nor non-Christian', while at the same time stressing that Hamlet's skepticism 'passes into something very rich and strange' that has merely not been named (p. 391). Alternatively, Perry notes, 'Shakespeare was a Christian, but early modern writers (including Shakespeare, I think) were also accustomed to accommodating ethical and political wisdom drawn from classical writers to a Christian worldview' (p. 30, endnote 24). In his book on agency in *Hamlet*, John E. Curran Jr. argues that Shakespeare reworks the Amleth material to create 'a story which invalidates Catholic doctrines of free will in humans and contingency in the universe', but with the aim 'to shake us into a realization of just what comes of the root-and-branch abolition of Catholic ideas and of the unqualified acceptance of Calvinistic ones'; see John E. Curran Jr, *'Hamlet', Protestantism, and the Mourning of Contingency: Not to Be* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 16.

[34] *OED*, 'rotten, *adj*., *n*., and *adv*., A.II.6a'. The phrase from Shakespeare ('something is rotten in the state of Denmark' [1.4.100]) means 'there is a corrupt element underlying a situation'; see *OED*, 'rotten, *adj*., *n*., and *adv*., (P2)'.

[35] Perry asserts, 'Questions about the ethics of revenge are raised implicitly in all early modern revenge plays, but no other revenge play [that is, other than *Hamlet*] treats this kind of ethical deliberation about revenge as part of the explicit burden of the avenger' (p. 87).

[36] Linda Charnes, 'The Hamlet Formerly Known as Prince', in *Shakespeare and Modernity: Early Modern to Millennium*, ed. by Hugh Grady (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 189-210 (p. 191). Of course, *Paradise Lost* is also concerned about morality and corruption: for Bryan Adams Hampton, 'Milton draws upon a notion of virtue that is intimately related to early Christian philosophical contemplation and conversion'; see Bryan Adams Hampton, *Fleshly Tabernacles: Milton and the Incarnational Poetics of Revolutionary England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), p. 135. While Hampton discusses how Satan serves as 'the archetypal template for Milton of all restless souls and misreaders: those moored upon the false stability of Leviathan by either choice or lack of vigilance and virtue' (p. 135), I focus on intertextuality in terms of genre.

an accident, and the court is not aware that Claudius murdered his brother until the third act.[37] So, on the one hand, Hamlet is right to feel uncertain about the Ghost's story, but, on the other hand, if Claudius did kill Hamlet Sr, there is far more at stake in Hamlet's finding out the truth and bringing it to light. However, *Hamlet* is also more morally ambiguous than the *Historica Danica* because of the different perspectives from which these stories are told. For example, is the Ghost of Hamlet Sr real? In these ways, morality is made much more ambiguous in *Hamlet* than the *Historica Danica*, with the effect that neither characters nor readers can discern who/what is right or wrong, which, in turn, upends the very veracity of any kind of truth.

It is notable that, for Hamlet, divinity itself is equivocal since, typically, religion, in addition to civil law, is the source of human morality. In Act 2, Hamlet admits to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that not only does he despise the earth and himself – the phrase 'goodly frame' can refer to the physical earth and/or the human body composed of earthly matter, since Hamlet afterward laments '[w]hat a piece of work' man is (2.2.327) – but he is also uncertain about the heavens:

> I have of late, but
> wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all
> custom of exercises, and, indeed, it goes so heavily
> with my disposition that this goodly frame, the
> Earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most
> excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'er-
> hanging firmament, this majestical roof, fretted
> with golden fire – why, it appeareth nothing to me
> but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. (2.2.318-26)

In the quotation above, it is unclear whether Hamlet questions the heavens, which he nevertheless describes as 'most excellent', 'brave', and 'majestical', because of a proximity between earth and heaven (the meeting of various 'vapors') that effectively corrupts the latter, or if he is realizing that heaven cannot but appear *to him* as 'foul and pestilent' while he is in his current 'disposition'. In either case, the heavens are, from Hamlet's point of view, also corrupt.

[37] For analysis of the play's use of Saxo Grammaticus, see Miola.

As I point out, and as the textual history of the play, including the first quarto, implies, there is some Christianity in *Hamlet*, but how much and how earnest it is I do not know.[38] It is not so much that Hamlet the character's stout Christianity is stifled by his secular world, but that *Paradise Lost* suggests an occluded Christian element in *Hamlet*, which appears as a seemingly random delay of action – most notably, when Hamlet decides *against* killing Claudius while he is, ostensibly, at prayer – because it never takes hold. However, this revenge tragedy contains enough features of the Christian epic (the search for truth but not fidelity to it, multiple dramatic voices, the desire for inward and outward personal consistency, etc.) that its major character toes the line between both genres, telling us less about 'the higher values' being brought to the genre (in this case, revenge tragedy) and more about the laborious, artistic process of transitioning from an increasingly outmoded genre into a new one.[39]

Hamlet the character looks ahead to Adam and Eve, Milton's fallen, Christian heroes, in his *attempt* to balance thoughts and actions. In Act 3, Hamlet says, 'Let me be cruel, not unnatural' (3.2.428), but in Act 5 Horatio tells Ferdinand and the English Ambassador of 'unnatural acts' (5.2.423). While Richard Meek suggests that '[i]t is unclear… whether Hamlet is able to follow his own advice about mingling judgement and temperance',[40] I will show that, ultimately, he is unable to do so. Hamlet's endeavour to mingle judgement with temperance, however, is clear. Upon visiting Gertrude, Hamlet expresses his desire to balance thoughts and actions with nature:

> O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
> The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom.
> Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
> I will speak daggers to her, but use none.
> My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites:
> How in my words somever she be shent,
> To give them seals never, my soul, consent. (3.2.426-32)

Hamlet pauses to think and reminds himself that he never wants his soul to be like Nero's, who killed his mother, Agrippina. To kill his mother, Hamlet realizes, would make his

[38] Lesser points out that 'it seems to have taken decades for anyone to perceive the speech [Hamlet's "To be"] as significantly *different from* the received version, rather than merely "a poor version" of it. A striking exception appears in an 1826 article in the French journal *Le Globe*, which notes that the "tendency of the [familiar version] is hardly at all religious", while the "tendency of the speech [in Q1] is completely different [due to its very religious sense]"' (p. 163; Desclozeaux qtd.).

[39] Lesser, p. 177.

[40] Meek, p. 90.

heart lose its nature, whereas to be cruel would be natural given the situation of Gertrude's hasty remarriage. Hamlet decides to punish his mother with words alone, forbidding himself to give them 'seals' – that is, validate his words by putting them into action.[41] While Hamlet seeks a balanced approach in dealing with his mother, he moves from one extreme (Nero's act of murder) to the other (no action). To be sure, earlier, Hamlet tells Ophelia how hard it is to align thoughts and actions: 'I am', he says,

> very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offenses at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? (3.1.134-9)

Shakespeare's use of prose for the prince's lines is telling. Hamlet's rushed words reflect his acknowledgement of a lack of resources – thoughts, imagination, and time – to be the typical revenger.[42] Noteworthy as well, however, is Hamlet's claim that he 'crawl[s] between earth and heaven', for this self-description paints him as a liminal figure, while at the same time suggesting an ominous proximity between earth and heaven. Hamlet is not the secular revenger, but he is also not a Christian martyr. He is, as he tells Ophelia, neither good nor bad: 'I am myself indifferent honest' (3.1.132-3).[43]

While, in the Romantic view of the play, the central problem of *Hamlet* is located 'not in Hamlet's situation but in his character: the tender, delicate, sensitive prince, unequal to the sacred duty of revenge, endlessly inventing excuses to escape from the harsh reality of action',[44] I suggest, instead, that the 'problems' of *Hamlet* result from Hamlet's incongruity with his setting. In other words, it is not that Hamlet is *unable* to perform 'the sacred duty of revenge' because of a character deficit, but that he seeks a theological ground for revenge in a world without this foothold. In comparison to John E. Curran Jr.'s claim that Shakespeare explores opposed theological positions – Protestant and Catholic

[41] Mowat and Werstine, *Hamlet*, note to 3.2.432, p. 160.

[42] About halfway through the play, Hamlet expresses his frustration that he is unable to balance thoughts and actions the way that the player can, a discrepancy that he finds 'monstrous' (2.2.578); see 2.2.578-89. In 2.2.580-1, 583-4, Hamlet esteems the player's ability to match outward appearances to inward thoughts, as the editors of the Folger edition of *Hamlet* note; see Mowat and Werstine, p. 116 (note to 2.2.580-81, 583-84). However, the second pair of lines suggests the primacy of thought over action, where the soul is in accord with thought, which foreshadows Hamlet's later obsession with thought, rather than the necessary balance between the two.

[43] 'Indifferent', of course, can also mean unconcerned or apathetic. See Bloom, pp. 408-9, for his argument that '[u]ntil Act V, Hamlet loves the dead father (or rather, his image) but does not persuade us that he loves (or ever loved) anyone else' (p. 408).

[44] Lesser, p. 169.

– to show that Calvinist predestination makes fate, as opposed to human agency, the supreme ruler in the play,[45] my argument is less extreme: Hamlet possesses agency,[46] but he is yet to have a purchase on his own theology. For Zachary Lesser, the reception history of the text itself has obscured a notable religious aspect: in the familiar 'To be' speech conventional Christianity is occluded by way of the 'conscience does make cowards [of us all]' line (3.1.91) arriving removed from the theological scaffolding that was its appropriate context – this scaffolding is present in the Q1 version.[47] Lesser observes,

> before the late nineteenth century, the idea that Hamlet's *conscience* might mean 'speculation' or 'self-reflection' was practically unheard of, while the moral-religious meaning was almost universally taken for granted. By the first decades of the twentieth century, however, all that had changed: the critical climate had become receptive enough to the new gloss that it rapidly came to dominate.[48]

Lesser asserts that the bad Q1 version of the speech is more logical and well-organized than our familiar version,[49] a version which, I maintain, becomes a perplexing mixture of more secular musings on death and theological remainders. Indeed, regardless of its provenance, the move from the religiously traditional Q1 to Q2/F stages the retraction of this theological foothold. Perhaps in part because Hamlet is cognizant of the importance of personal morality without ascribing to a specific theology – he is, I argue, however, attempting to determine what a modern theology might look like – early twentieth century readers (and viewers) of *Hamlet* have readily, though misguidedly, accepted an understanding of the play that privileges the individual over the communal or religious. That is, Christian footholds in *Hamlet* have been occluded in two senses: first, through Hamlet's seemingly ambiguous religious affiliation, which downplays the play's Christian elements; and second, through early twentieth century readers' proclivity to read the play in terms of preconceived notions of what constitutes 'modern' poetry rather than *Hamlet*'s actual cultural and historical moment.

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[45] Curran argues, 'Hamlet is trying in vain to change things through meritorious action, but he is also railing against the way things have gone and the way they invariably are now and will be in the future' (p. 193). For Curran, the famous 'To be' speech in *Hamlet* signals precisely what is 'Not to be' (see p. 193).

[46] For example, Hamlet successfully carries out his plan to use a play to 'catch the conscience of the King' (2.2.634): during the performance, Claudius rises when the poisoner murders Gonzago, and Hamlet exclaims, 'O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for / a thousand pound. Didst perceive [how Claudius reacted]?' (3.2.312-3; see also 3.2.291).

[47] See Lesser, pp. 163-4.

[48] Ibid., p. 168.

[49] Ibid., p. 162.

Hamlet, as Christian revenge tragedy protagonist, looks forward to Adam and Eve, who are the first fallen, Christian epic protagonists: morally corrupted but still able to be heroic.[50] 'Christian revenge tragedy' is an oxymoron in itself and, in trying to be both, *Hamlet* ultimately becomes neither. Bloom also draws comparison between *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost*, but he makes a single claim without any elaboration: '*Hamlet* is scarcely the revenge tragedy that it only pretends to be. It is theater of the world, like *The Divine Comedy* or *Paradise Lost* or *Faust*, or *Ulysses*, or *In Search of Lost Time*'.[51] Bloom's 'theater of the world' refers to the 'cosmological drama of man's fate',[52] which is depicted in all five texts. He regards *Hamlet* as 'a revised point of origin', where it 'began as Shakespeare's first play' (to which he often returned),[53] but I view it from an aesthetic perspective (not biographical), namely, as a play that anticipates – and works toward, through revision – a specific literary genre: epic. While Neill focuses on how *Hamlet*'s 'seeming climax is, in terms of the revenge plot, at least, a violent anticlimax', where 'the only practical effect of the Prince's theatrical triumph is to hand the initiative decisively to Claudius', Neill's claim that 'it serves to confirm the truth of what the ghost has said'[54] implies a more theological aim on the part of this modern prince: Hamlet seeks to determine the truth, to know, that is, exactly who (or what!) he is up against, before acting, because he is a fallible – and, in the Q1 version, *Christian* – man living in a morally corrupt world.[55]

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[50] Wilson, however, disagrees with some critics' suggestion that *Paradise Lost* 'is a "Christian tragedy" that results in a final catharsis, in the manifestation of God's grace at the end of book 10', for 'this is to neglect the tragic mode of the next two books of the poem, which present Christian history as no less depressing and apparently endless than pagan tragedy' (pp. 169-70). While I agree with Wilson that the end of the poem is tragic insofar as Adam and Eve and their progeny can only demonstrate a fallen, Christian epic heroism, I see a transition from the hero-villain (Hamlet and Satan) to the hero-with-potential, which Adam and Eve represent. *Paradise Lost* provides a 'way out' – a kind of Ariadne's thread in a torturous maze (representative of the challenges of modernity, as it were) – in contrast to the dead-end that Hamlet runs up against.

[51] Bloom, p. 383.

[52] Ibid., p. 405.

[53] Ibid., p. 416. Bloom reads *Hamlet*'s process of revision through a personal lens: 'A mourning for Hamnet [Shakespeare's only male son, presumably named after Amleth] and for John Shakespeare may reverberate in Horatio's (and the audience's) mourning for Hamlet. The mystery of Hamlet, and of *Hamlet*, turns upon mourning as a mode of revisionism, and possibly upon revision itself as a kind of mourning for Shakespeare's own earlier self' (p. 400).

[54] Neill, pp. 326-7.

[55] Adam and Eve, as fallen heroes, must suffer for and defend truth (the Christian faith), but who or what does Hamlet defend? In *Hamlet*, the truth is unclear, and the grounds of truth itself are at stake. Hamlet, like Adam and Eve, suffers, but to what end?

So, why does Hamlet not kill Claudius as soon as he catches his uncle with *The Mousetrap*? The reason for Hamlet's inability to balance thoughts and actions at this point is in part that he knows too much. As Bloom notes, 'Consciousness is his [Hamlet's] salient characteristic; he is the most aware and knowing figure ever conceived'.[56] Now that Hamlet has found the Ghost's claims to be true, it is not just biblical passages (such as Romans 12) that prevent him from carrying out his revenge, but also a profound distrust in any order to the universe since this corruption permeates the world over.[57] Put differently, Hamlet is disenchanted with the world. He, as Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche suggests, becomes a Dionysian man, who sees no way to right a world that is too far gone:

> In this sense the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they have *gained knowledge*, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; they feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint. Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion… [T]rue knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action, both in Hamlet and in the Dionysian man.[58]

While Satan enacts his revenge on Adam and Eve in Book 9 because he is under the illusion that he can pervert God's goodness, Hamlet kills Claudius by chance alone in Act 5. Because he finds the world irredeemable, Hamlet does not act. He cannot be a Christian without faith, and he is precisely without faith if he thinks that the world is irredeemable. This could be why, as Bloom notes, Hamlet subverts Christian beliefs at the end of the play.[59] Hamlet, at first simply wanting to know the truth of Hamlet Sr's death, knows too much after he is sent to England and returns to Denmark. For the first time, Hamlet acknowledges that Claudius has not *only* killed his father and ruined his mother, but also, having taken the crown away from Hamlet, ruined his deserved life: 'He [Claudius] that hath killed my king and whored my mother, / Popped in between th' election and my hopes, / Thrown out his angle for my proper life' (5.2.72-4).[60] Earlier, Hamlet merely

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[56] Bloom, p. 404.

[57] The relevant biblical passage is as follows: 'Recompense to no man evil for evil.… Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord' (Romans 12. 17-19); see *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), p. 202.

[58] Nietzsche qtd. in Bloom, pp. 393-4.

[59] Bloom notes, 'Hamlet, toward the close [of the play], employs some Christian vocabulary, but he swerves from Christian comfort into a Dionysian consciousness, and his New Testament citations become strong misreadings of both Protestant and Catholic understandings of the text' (p. 421).

[60] Some qualification is needed regarding my point about Hamlet's deserved life: as Hamlet himself acknowledges in the quotation, Denmark is an elective monarchy.

accused Claudius of having stolen Hamlet Sr's crown: 'A cutpurse of the empire and the rule, / That from a shelf the precious diadem stole / And put it in his pocket –' (3.4.113-5). In the words of Bloom, 'Consciousness itself has aged him [Hamlet, who "has aged a decade in a brief return from the sea"[61]], the catastrophic consciousness of *the spiritual disease of his world*, which he has internalized, and which he does not wish to be called upon to remedy, if only because the true cause of his changeability is his drive toward freedom'.[62] Hamlet, the Dionysian man, no longer tempers his thoughts and actions but dwells on his ever-expanding knowledge, which prevents him from making any decisions.

Hamlet's desire for absolute freedom of the will anticipates Milton's epic on free will, and its perversion and loss. Only, *Paradise Lost* shows how fallen man and woman, after gaining knowledge of good and evil, can return to their role as heroes rather than become hero-villains. Throughout the epic, Adam and Eve possess free will. Prior to the Fall, Adam rejoices in their 'ample world' (4.413), and even '[t]he sublime close of the epic [12.646-9] describes a world of almost infinite, contingent possibility'.[63] Adam and Eve, though fallen, 'choose / Their place of rest' in the world that 'was all before them' (12.646-7). However, after the Fall free will is forever changed, and this change corresponds to a change in Adam and Eve's Christian epic heroism. In Book 12, Michael relates the specifics to Adam:

> yet know withal,
> Since thy original lapse, true liberty
> Is lost, which always with right reason dwells
> Twinned, and from her hath no dividual being:
> Reason in man obscured, or not obeyed,
> Immediately inordinate desires
> And upstart passions catch the government
> From reason, and to servitude reduce
> Man till then free. (12.82-90)

True liberty is lost because Adam sinned. He divided true liberty from reason; as a result, desires and passions rule humans rather than reason. As a result, humans are reduced to servitude. However, Michael also distinguishes between outward and inward liberty,

[61] Bloom, p. 411.

[62] Ibid., p. 430 (emphasis added).

[63] David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 304.

revealing to Adam that, while outward liberty might be deprived through violent lords or justice, inward liberty is irreversibly lost (see 12.90-101). Despite the loss of true liberty, Adam and Eve and their progeny receive intermittent blessings from God – that is, grace – which help them choose to trust in God's love again.[64] Adam's recasting of Milton's earlier redefinition of epic heroism – 'the better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom / Unsung' (9.31-3) becomes fallen Adam's proclamation 'that suffering for truth's sake / Is fortitude to highest victory, / And to the faithful death the gate of life' (12.569-71) – transforms it into an epic heroism that Adam and Eve, as well as their progeny, can take part in.[65] Thus, the epic transitions from representing epic heroism to representing fallen, Christian epic heroism. Though fallen Adam and Eve express a willingness to be heroic martyrs (as we will see), we only see them suffer for truth's sake.

Satan's Tragic 'Problems'

In the chasm between Satan and Hamlet, Satan's incongruity with his setting looks back to a heroism being superseded and which is now become tragic. Like Hamlet, Satan fails to take his 'desperate revenge' (3.85) on God until Book 9 – and then, again also like Hamlet, only indirectly. Gazing on Adam and Eve, Satan acknowledges, 'Thank him who puts me loath to this revenge / On you who wrong me not for him who wronged' (4.386-7). Just as Hamlet punishes his mother rather than Claudius, Satan enacts revenge on God's newest creation rather than God Himself.[66] Satan is then perceived to be 'mad' (4.129) and is described in terms of slowness and delay. For Stephen B. Dobranski, Satan at times bears resemblance to a turtle: 'Wearing his shield on his back [instead of in front of him, which was the norm for heroes], crawling from lake to land, slowly moving with "uneasy steps" (I, 295), Satan momentarily resembles – to compare great things with small – one of the amphibious tortoises described in seventeenth-century animal

[64] For an example of this grace, see Book 12, lines 120-34.

[65] According to the *OED*, 'martyrdom, *n.*', in extended use, denotes 'sufferings and penalties involved in maintaining a particular (usually moral or ethical) position or point of view' and '[t]orment, agony; extreme or severe pain or suffering, esp. when protracted or prolonged'; see *OED*, 'martyrdom, *n.*, 1c, 3'. Both definitions of 'martyrdom' apply to fallen Adam and Eve; as believers in a world overturned by evil, Adam and Eve must actively defend their faith, which is the truth, until the Second Coming.

[66] When Hamlet berates his mother in Act 3, the Ghost appears, reminds Hamlet of his purpose, and says, 'O, step between her [Gertrude] and her fighting soul. / Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works. / Speak to her, Hamlet' (3.4.129-31). Meanwhile, in *Paradise Lost* the narrator relates, 'Satan, now first inflamed with rage, came down, / The tempter ere the accuser of mankind, / To wreak on innocent frail man his loss' (4.9-11). Notably, both acts of revenge are represented as morally wrong – less ambiguously so in *Paradise Lost*, since the Ghost is not proven right until Act 5, whereas the narrator in Milton's epic is presented as trustworthy from the beginning.

encyclopedias'.[67] Elsewhere in the poem, Milton's narrator portrays Satan's voyage across Chaos using phrases signaling hesitance and sluggishness:[68] 'looked awhile, / Pondering' and 'At last' (2.918-9, 927).[69] However, Satan's voyage is also shown as unequivocally tragic through an extended ship metaphor, where Satan is up a creek without a paddle. After describing Satan '[f]luttering his pennons vain', the narrator observes that Satan 'foundered on', where 'foundered on' means a ship that fills with water and sinks, and that the 'crude consistence' of Chaos 'behoves him now both oar and sail' (2.933, 940, 941, 942).[70] Similar to Hamlet's situation, only 'ill chance' (2.935), a vestige of secular Greek and Latin epics (where fate rather than God is in charge), permits Satan to cross Chaos successfully.[71] In summary, the narrator portrays Satan's

[67] See Stephen B. Dobranski, 'Pondering Satan's Shield in Milton's *Paradise Lost*', *English Literary Renaissance* 35.3 (2005), 490-506 (p. 500); see also Dobranski, p. 498, for a discussion of conventional shield placement. Dobranski asserts that 'Satan's backwards shield, in the context of Milton's Christian epic, suggests that classical modes of heroism are backwards, perhaps thoroughly wrong, at least retrograde' (p. 498-9).

[68] Interestingly, '[a] link between snails and tortoises extends back at least to the late fourteenth century when "snail" was used to signify shell-carrying gastropods as well as tortoises and turtles'; see Dobranski, p. 502 (fn. 36). This connection between snails – known for their exceeding slowness – and tortoises supports my claim that Milton is subverting Satan's heroic status.

[69] It is worth noting, however, that in the Pandemonium scenes time passes quickly. For example, the narrator observes that the reprobate spirits far outdo humans in strength and art: 'in an hour [is built] / What in an age they [humans] with incessant toil / And hands innumerable scarce perform' (1.697-9). The speed of the reprobate angels is emphasized through words such as 'soon' (1.705, 723), 'Anon' (1.710, 759), 'hasty' (1.730), and 'short' (1.797). Notably, however, this episode occurs early in the poem, when Satan first appears to be an epic hero. The other Pandemonium scene, though occurring much later (in Book 10) and demonstrating the speed of Satan and his followers, is merely illusory: Satan's followers spread their bane 'with speed' (10.410), and Satan 'passed' easily through the gate to hell and then amidst his followers (10.419, 443), but God thereafter reveals that *He* 'called and drew them thither / My hell-hounds, to lick up the draff and filth' (10.629-30). In other words, Satan and his minions appear most in control when they are in fact simply carrying out God's plan.

[70] Milton's use of a nautical metaphor here suggests, I think, an interpretation similar to what Hampton asserts in terms of Milton's portrayal of the little 'skiff' in Book 1 of the poem (see line 204), namely, that '[w]ith vigilant care, the ship of one's soul will navigate successfully the raging waters and find its proper moorings in the church and in divine love' (p. 143). Hampton points to Augustine for comparison, a philosopher who used the nautical metaphor considerably 'to describe his own spiritual wanderings' (p. 143). In this case, Milton upends the traditional idea of 'the ship of one's soul' successfully navigating the raging waters.

[71] In his discussion of Satan's spear, Dobranski shows how Milton includes vestiges of Greco-Roman warfare to demonstrate that these traditionally heroic conventions are now antiquated: 'By casting this emblem of Greco-Roman warfare as a crutch [see 1.295 and 6.195], Milton may also subtly suggest that such conventions have become old and lame' (p. 491). Satan's shield similarly 'diminishes his heroic stature even as it allies him with Radigund and Achilles', for 'Satan's desire for the shield's protection reveals that he is not as courageous as his opening speeches suggest' (Dobranski, pp. 497 and 498).

voyage through Chaos as 'tragic' in a laughable and ridiculous way, so that he gains our disdain rather than respect.

Further, the narrator presents Raphael as a foil to Satan a few books later by using similar watery language to depict this good angel's flight from heaven to Paradise to meet Adam and Eve:

> From hence, no cloud, or, to obstruct his sight,
> Star interposed, however small he sees,
> … Down thither prone in flight
> He speeds, and through the vast ethereal sky
> Sails between worlds and worlds, with steady wing
> Now on the polar winds, then with quick fan
> Winnows the buxom air; till within soar
> Of towering eagles, to all the fowls he seems
> A phoenix, gazed by all,
> … At once on the eastern cliff of Paradise
> He lights, and to his proper shape returns (5.257-76).

Raphael sees little because of how fast he travels. Unlike Satan, who, like a ship, 'plumb down… drops / Ten thousand fathom deep' (2.933-4), Raphael '[s]ails between worlds and worlds' 'with steady wing' and 'quick fan'. Further, while Satan embarks 'At last' (2.927) on his flight through Chaos, Raphael lands 'At once' on Paradise. Raphael is meant to procure our awe and respect, just as all the fowls gaze at him as if he were a phoenix risen from the ashes. In the full passage, the narrator employs a second epic simile to convey Raphael's heroism – Galileo's sight is 'less assured' (5.262) than Raphael's – whereas the epic similes used to convey Satan's voyage and, later, his stabs at revenge, are purposely deflated to disparage a superseded heroism and make it tragic. In regard to Book 4, when Satan's pursuit of Adam and Eve is compared to a tiger that spies two fawns at play, 'as one who chose his ground / Whence rushing… might surest seize them both / Gripped in each paw' (4.406-8), Colin Burrow observes, 'This hypothetical pounce of martial assertiveness… falls flat, tripping over its conditional form'.[72] Though Burrow states that Satan 'teeters on the edge of some great assault, but never moves from his desires or stated intentions to the corresponding deeds', he compares Satan's frustrations to 'a Ruggiero before an unattainable Angelica [in

[72] Colin Burrow, *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 272.

Lodovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*]'[73] instead of Hamlet, who possesses the desire to enact revenge on Claudius but does not do so until Act 5, and then only inadvertently.

Meanwhile, Milton's narrator uses a vocabulary of speed and certainty to describe even postlapsarian Adam and Eve's actions, which suggests their heroic purposiveness. Against Satan, Adam and Eve achieve a balanced subjectivity that answers *Hamlet*'s 'problems' and which the poem hopes to bequeath to an emergent modernity.[74] Their prayers, for example, 'winged for heaven with speedier flight / Than loudest oratory' (11.7-8).[75] To further emphasize the speed of the couple's prayers, the narrator uses the phrases 'Flew up, nor missed the way' and 'in they passed' (11.15, 16). Though Adam and Eve fail to sustain a balanced subjectivity in Book 9, they are quick to recognize their failure (in the next book) and receive grace from God soon after.[76]

Specifically, when Adam and Eve's prostrate bodies, sighs, and tears are consistent with their hearts and words, these physical actions reinstate order between themselves and God. Their prayer of repentance (see 10.1098-1104) creates peace in their relationship with God. Following Adam and Eve's prayer in Book 10, the narrator relates how

> [p]revenient grace descending had removed
> The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh
> Regenerate grow instead, that sighs now breathed
> Unutterable, which the spirit of prayer
> Inspired… (11.3-7)

Prevenient grace has come down from God to help Adam and Eve be remorseful. The growth of 'new flesh' is an example of this spiritual aid, for it takes away the 'stony' from the human couple's hearts. Adam and Eve can pray only after God has made that happen. Sighs, or the physical act of breathing deeply, are provoked by the spirit of prayer, even though Adam and Eve are unable to utter the prayers, and God acknowledges this physical act as a spiritual aim. This situation is different from Satan's, who can but does not ask for grace, and Hamlet's, who wants a clear sign of favour from heaven but struggles to

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[73] Ibid., p. 271.

[74] In Book 11, Michael laments the lack of temperance after the Fall, observing that 'all shall turn degenerate, all depraved, / Justice and temperance, truth and faith forgot' (11.806-7).

[75] In Act 1 scene 5 of *Hamlet*, Hamlet says to the Ghost, 'Haste me to know 't, that I, with wings as swift / As meditation or the thoughts of love / May sweep to my revenge' (1.5.35-7), but revenge is delayed until Act 5.

[76] As an effect of the Fall, the narrator observes at length that 'high passions' (9.1123) disturb Adam and Eve's minds, which are now un-easy; see 9.1120-33.

find one in a corrupt world. Milton shows us Hamlet the character again, in his Satan, who denotes the secular, while also showing us Adam and Eve, who problematize the self by showing us a seeming dead-end (the Fall), but then, through faith, a miraculous *conversion*. Before the Fall, both Adam and Eve, unlike Hamlet, balance thoughts and actions with nature. For example, Adam's – and all but once, Eve's – sleep is 'airy light from pure digestion bred, / And temperate vapours bland' (5.3-4). Further, the single night that Satan tries to corrupt Eve while she is sleeping, Adam and Eve promptly restore balance to their thoughts and actions through prayer. After Adam and Eve sing God's praise, the narrator relates, 'So prayed they innocent, and to their thoughts / Firm peace recovered soon and wonted calm' (5.209-10).[77] Thus, unlike Hamlet, pre- and postlapsarian Adam and Eve achieve a balanced subjectivity through their eagerness to convey spiritual intentions through physical acts.

Moreover, Adam and Eve achieve a self-sacrificial (that is, martyrdom) subjectivity – one that *Paradise Lost* seeks to promote in a modern world – in contrast to Hamlet and Satan's self-centered consciousness. Milton redefines heroism at the start of Book 9 as 'the better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom' (9.31-2).[78] Adam and Eve possess self-sacrificial egos, whereas Hamlet, like Satan, holds onto his huge solipsistic consciousness. Instead of testifying to the truth – namely, Claudius's murder of Hamlet Sr. – with his dying breath, Hamlet begs Horatio to tell Hamlet's *own* story. Hamlet's response contrasts with events in *Paradise Lost*, where the Father attributes heroism to characters that perform 'the testimony of truth' (6.33) by publicly arguing against falsity, no matter the personal cost.[79] Even right after the Fall, Adam and Eve want to testify to the truth and be self-sacrificing. In Book 10, Eve's heroic martyrdom and patience initiates Adam and Eve's collective restoration. Eve is not so repelled when Adam turns away from her, but instead falls to his feet, embraces them, and says that she

> to the place of judgment will return,
> There with my cries importune heaven, that all
> The sentence from thy head removed may light

[77] In Book 11, Michael not only esteems peace, but also condemns violence (in particular, the spilling of a lot of blood), which was revered in the revenge tragedy; see 11.787-96.

[78] Within the context of the Christian Church, 'martyrdom' means '[t]he sufferings and death of a martyr; the act of becoming or the condition of being a martyr'; however, in non-Christian contexts, it means 'the killing or sacrifice of a person in defence of a belief, cause, etc'; see *OED*, 'martyrdom, *n*., 1 a, b'. Today, martyrdom is still often connected to the hero-figure. According to Dean A. Miller, the hero takes a risk that threatens their life; see *The Epic Hero* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 1.

[79] For example, the Father praises Abdiel, 'who single hast maintained / Against revolted multitudes the cause / Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms' (6.30-2); see 6.29-37.

On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,
Me me only just object of his [God's] ire. (10.932-6)

Eve's repetition of the word 'me' – here, associated with self-sacrifice – makes her speech ring of martyrdom. Her offer to withstand suffering and death on her own, and in defence of her trust in God's love, stirs heroic martyrdom in Adam. He says to Eve that if prayers were able to change high declarations,

I to that place,
Would speed before thee, and be louder heard,
That on my head all might be visited,
Thy frailty and infirmer sex forgiven,
To me committed and by me exposed. (10.953-7)

Like Eve before him – in this case, the hero is model – Adam reprises the word 'me' in his dialogue. He asserts that he merits the blame, for he neglected to do his part in their relationship, which was not to expose Eve to Satan. Adam acknowledges his guilt and proposes to confess it to God. Eve and then Adam are transformed into relational heroes: when they offer to give up their lives, they are defending the truth and endeavouring to eradicate another person's suffering. Though the couple has not asked for forgiveness from God yet, and so their thoughts and actions remain imbalanced, they correctly identify that some great self-sacrifice is required.[80] While Adam and Eve fall in Book 9, they achieve a balanced and self-sacrificial subjectivity both before and after the Fall, which, through imagery of speed and certainty, as well as meaningful prayer, is shown to answer *Hamlet*'s 'problems'.

The Hero as Problem Versus the Hero as Model

While David Loewenstein asserts that Satan 'embodies the old-style martial virtues and heroic ideology of the epic tradition',[81] which would make him an outmoded epic hero, I

[80] Adam and Eve recognize that some great self-sacrifice is required, but I maintain that they choose to be self-sacrificing – this is a skill that they learn how to do, in part from each other – rather than being forced into this behaviour due to their fallen subjectivity. Well before the Fall, Eve learns from her experience at the lake that she needs to turn self-love toward others instead of toward the self.

[81] David Loewenstein, 'The Seventeenth-Century Protestant English Epic', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*, ed. by Catherine Bates (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 146-66 (p. 148).

suggest that Satan reduces himself (over time) to the antiquated hero of Greek tragedy and is thus antiepic. Satan, 'with [his] thoughts inflamed' (2.630), relapses into the secular revenge hero that *Hamlet* had already marked as a dead-end. The text absorbs Satan as a vestige of the older genre.[82] We saw that Satan fails to act on his desire for revenge and, according to Dean A. Miller, 'The tragic protagonist agonizes over acts and choices, is torn between alternatives, recognizes (too late) the potent workings of a pollution-creating act, of the fact and pain of tearing guilt, and of the grimmer purposes of the ultimately unknowable gods'.[83] When Satan sees Adam and Eve for the first time, he is similar to Hamlet when he sees Claudius attempting to pray. While Satan ponders,

> And should I at your harmless innocence
> Melt, as I do, yet public reason just,
> Honour and empire with revenge enlarged,
> By conquering this new world, compels me now
> To do what else though damned I should abhor. (4.388-92)

Hamlet, observing Claudius, thinks to himself, 'Now I might do it pat, now he is a-praying, / And now I'll do 't' (3.3.77-8). Despite both characters' use of the word 'now', neither man carries out his revenge right then. Notwithstanding the enjambment after 'now', and the end-stop in the next line, which are poetic markers of resolve, Satan does not carry out his revenge until five books later. Hamlet similarly agonizes over the decision to kill Claudius, the repetition of 'now' three times stressing both his inner struggle to make a choice and the biblical significance of the number three, since Hamlet realizes that Claudius might go 'to heaven' (3.3.79) – which would be 'hire and salary, not revenge' (3.3.84)! – if he dies at prayer. In this way, both Satan and Hamlet possess characteristics of the tragic protagonist, despite these characters' location in different literary genres (epic and revenge tragedy, respectively).

However, Satan fits Miller's description of the tragic protagonist much more than Hamlet does, not only because his story follows *Hamlet*, where Hamlet already marked a dead-end for the revenge-tragedy, but also because he voices regret after his revenge. In Book 9, Satan thinks to himself, 'Revenge, at first though sweet, / Bitter ere long back on itself recoils' (9.171-2). Though Satan says in ensuing lines that he does not care about the

[82] Though she does not use the word 'vestige', Wilson also discusses the presence of tragic elements in the epic – elements that she locates even in Books 11 and 12: 'But like earlier tragic texts, *Paradise Lost* does not entirely repress the sense of overliving… Nor do the final books provide a clear endorsement of the view that the Fall led ultimately to good' (p. 165).

[83] Miller, p. 7.

bitter effects of his revenge, the narrator observes in Book 4 how 'conscience wakes despair / That slumbered', and Satan himself asks, 'is there no place / Left for repentance, none for pardon left?' (4.23-4, 79-80). Much later, in Book 10, Satan experiences 'the fact and pain of tearing guilt' that Miller describes as emblematic of the tragic protagonist:

> when he saw descend
> The Son of God to judge them [fallen Adam and Eve] terrified
> He fled, not hoping to escape, but shun
> The present, fearing guilty what his wrath
> Might suddenly inflict… (10.337-41)

Satan knows he cannot hope to escape the Son's wrath, and he is absolutely terrified of what may happen because he is 'guilty' of the temptation of Eve. Miller further writes, 'Daniel Madelénat, considering the hero of the epic as he is transmuted into a tragic hero, can conclude that the epic hero is antitragic, and the tragic hero antiepic'.[84] As a tragic hero like Hamlet, Satan is antiepic and therefore befits Greek tragedy, which, as Jean-Pierre Vernant contends, 'shows the hero as *problem* rather than as *model*'.[85] Satan becomes 'the hero as *problem*' in *Paradise Lost* when his actions correspond to the characteristics of the traditional epic hero, which Milton condemns at the start of Books 1, 7, and 9, and then with the tragic hero (which is anti-epic), instead of the Miltonic heroism that Milton redefines at the start of Book 9. For example, in the vein of the traditional epic hero, Satan '[r]aised… war in heaven and battle proud' (1.43), which Milton's narrator delineates as an 'impious' and 'vain attempt' (1.43, 44). Another example of Satan's problematic heroism is when Gabriel addresses Satan and observes that the other angels do not support his example of offenses:

> Why hast thou, Satan, broke the bounds prescribed
> To thy transgressions, and disturbed the charge
> Of others, who approve not to transgress
> By thy example, but have power and right
> To question thy bold entrance on this place [Eden]… (4.878-82)

Gabriel makes it clear that Satan is not a model, but a problem. Moreover, Gabriel empowers the other angels but disqualifies Satan's entrance into Eden. Through both Satan's opposition to Milton's redefinition of the epic hero and the narrator's description

[84] Ibid.

[85] Qtd. in ibid., p. 8.

of Satan's actions as non-admirable, Milton demonstrates that Satan represents the hero as problem.

While Satan expresses regret for his willful actions, something that Hamlet does not do,[86] his self-criticism does not extend far enough for him to right his behaviour so that he can become an epic hero, which shows that he, like Hamlet (but different from Augustine), must be driven into his madness through soliloquy rather than relieved of it.[87] Here is Satan driven into despair:

> Me miserable! which way shall I fly
> Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
> Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell;
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
> Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
> To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven. (4.73-8)[88]

Not only does Satan become more despairing as his soliloquy continues – 'in the lowest deep a lower deep', he laments – but we see the hero as problem, again, in this 'self-problematical self', where Satan realizes that he cannot flee from hell because, for him,

[86] The exception is Hamlet's expression of regret for having killed Polonius. However, Hamlet's regret is not at all the same as Satan's in this case, since Satan willfully chooses to rebel against God and seek revenge on Adam and Eve, while Hamlet kills Polonius by accident (he thinks that Polonius is Claudius). For the opposing viewpoint that Hamlet kills Polonius due to the inevitability of fate, see Curran, who argues, 'An act so oddly out of step with the dramatic display of revenge he [Hamlet] constantly envisions, this quick and unheroic attempt to kill the King seems instigated by no process of conscious decision-making… It is an instant sweeping him away to his fate, which he causes without having agency, without choosing or deciding anything' (p. 194).

[87] Eisendrath, p. 584. According to Eisendrath, 'From Augustine until the eighteenth century, the word ["soliloquy"] refers primarily to spiritual meditations (as opposed to self-reflective monologues in drama), but even in this earlier period, the word marks an emphasis on problematic introspection' (p. 583).

[88] Hamlet says, 'there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me, it [Denmark] is a prison' (2.2.268-70). Hamlet's observation that *thinking* makes something good or bad is grounded in individualism rather than faith. However, while Satan sees no way out of his predicament, Hamlet recognizes the significance of personal choice ('*To me*, it is a prison'). Satan does not consider the possibility of growth or change: 'A mind not to be changed by place or time. / The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven' (1.253-5). While Denmark is a prison for Hamlet because he views it that way, the mind itself is a prison – a prison of the self – for Satan. Satan's and Hamlet's individualism strengthen in opposite ways: Satan feels that he has less and less freedom (he is imprisoned within himself), while Hamlet's freedom to choose expands without moral restraint.

it is himself.[89] The soliloquy marks a dead-end for Satan because he cannot 'see the truth that lies *beyond* himself', which is, as Eisendrath writes, a crucial part of the introspective process.[90] Instead of 'slowly disassembl[ing] all those aspects of the self that obstruct his view of God' and performing 'the intellectual task of seeking the truth… [by] cutting-back… mistruth',[91] Satan's self-criticism is merely a couple of lines: 'Nay cursed be thou; since against his [God's] thy will / Chose freely what it now so justly rues' (4.71-2).[92] Because Satan cannot imagine a way to escape himself, and he does not think it is possible to temper thoughts and actions even if God could forgive him – he says, 'how soon / Would height recall high thoughts' (4.94-5)[93] – he relapses into the secular revenge hero that Hamlet already marked as a dead-end.

Hamlet is also the hero as problem.[94] Only, unlike *Paradise Lost*, where we have Adam and Eve to imitate, *Hamlet* gives us nothing and no one – not even Laertes, as we will see next – to imitate and thus raises the question of what it is we were supposed to take away from the play. While Hamlet, startlingly, possesses a few characteristics of the epic hero near the start of the play but becomes more and more a tragic hero as the play progresses,[95]

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[89] Eisendrath observes, '[T]he innovation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is most often discussed in terms of problematic selfhood – the prince of Denmark is, according to such a reading, the first modern individual captivated by his own contradictions' (p. 581).

[90] Ibid., p. 584 (emphasis added).

[91] Ibid.

[92] According to Eisendrath, 'In Augustine's account, the introspective process is in no small way negative: thought approaches the truth through a process of relentless self-criticism' (p. 584).

[93] For Dobranski, 'Satan's dependence on material weapons suggests… corporeal decline while pointing up his destructive narcissism: the devil is attracted to things like himself that are more matter than spirit. Instead of returning to God and seeking forgiveness, he again and again puts his faith in things, whether a sword, shield, or apple' (p. 492). Satan's narcissism and solipsism prevent him from repenting. His focus is on the physical instead of the spiritual.

[94] For Bloom, 'even in 1600-1601[, Shakespeare's "revised" Hamlet, as Bloom contends], is very much a hero-villain, anticipating Iago' (p. 415). Bloom observes, 'If you represent both your author's living art [Shakespeare's own creativity] and his prospect of annihilation [Shakespeare's death in his dead son and his dead father], you are likely to play the most equivocal and multivalent of roles, a hero-villain's' (p. 406). While Adam and Eve are also not entirely unproblematic, they, unlike Hamlet and Satan, are potential heroes rather than hero-villains by the end of the poem.

[95] In Act 1 scene 2, when readers or viewers encounter Hamlet for the first time, he professes to his mother the importance of not only 'showing' grief outwardly, but also feeling it inwardly (1.2.79-89). Unlike his mother, Hamlet claims, he feels his father's death in his very soul, which is in accord with his thoughts. Notably, at the start of the play, Hamlet's character fits descriptions of the English epic hero in the early seventeenth century, specifically, '[i]ts emphasis on "the mind's inward, constant and unconquered Empire" in response to the injustice of external circumstances, rather than on "the outward fashion of fortitude"' (see Burrow, p. 233). Hamlet's character reflects a shift in the epic heroic model, which, according to Kenneth Borris, featured '[a] cultural turn inward, so that personal behavior appeared to

Satan possesses a few characteristics of the traditional epic hero (such as his desire for war) near the start of the epic but becomes more and more like the antiquated hero of Greek tragedy. Both characters, however, are characterized by slowness and delay, as well as dead-end soliloquizing (among other things), which reflects an important constellation between the two.

Laertes: The Last Vestige of Revenge Tragedy

Laertes in *Hamlet*, like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, represents the past hero since he absorbs the antiquated revenge hero archetype. Specifically, while Hamlet moves further and further away from Hercules, 'a hero of extraordinary strength and courage'[96] that Hamlet says he is nothing like, Laertes, who is Hamlet's foil,[97] becomes clearly associated with Hercules.[98] Near the start of the play, Hamlet says, 'My father's brother… no more like my father / Than I to Hercules' (1.2.157-8). Throughout the play, Hamlet puts increasing

express inner states and conflicts of spiritual forces, tended to interiorize epic and fostered the literary expression of psychic conditions through external actions'; see *Allegory and Epic in English Renaissance Literature: Heroic Form in Sidney, Spenser, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 79. In arguing that Hamlet becomes more and more a tragic hero as the play progresses, I mean that he becomes an increasingly problematic hero.

[96] Mowat and Werstine, p. 30 (note to 1.2.158). Notably, Hercules is a Roman mythological figure based on Heracles, a Greek god. That Shakespeare references a Roman figure rather than a Greek god further supports my (and Perry's) claim that Shakespeare is interested in engaging with predecessors such as Seneca rather than abandoning them entirely (p. 18).

[97] Bloom focuses on the implications of self-revision: 'there is a peculiar doubling: Hamlet contends not only with the Ghost but with the ghost of the first Ghost as well, and with the ghost of the first Hamlet' (p. 402); see also p. 411 for more on self-revision in the play.

[98] In the *Historica Danica*, Saxo writes, 'Had fortune been as kind to him [Amleth or Hamlet] as nature, he would have equalled the gods in glory, and surpassed the labors of Hercules by his deeds of prowess' (p. 215). While Saxo's Amleth is also not associated with Hercules at the end of the story, Saxo, unlike Shakespeare, suggests that Amleth could have – and rightly, too – been Hercules. Significantly, in Book 3, line 568 of *Paradise Lost*, while Satan is travelling through space and musing on the possibility of life on other planets, Hesperides is mentioned in proximity to Satan: 'but nigh hand seemed other worlds, / Or other worlds they seemed, or happy isles, / Like those Hesperian gardens famed of old' (3.566-8); see 3.564-71. The Hesperides story is somewhat relevant to *Paradise Lost* because one of Hercules's twelve labours was killing a serpent or dragon in the Garden of the Hesperides to retrieve apples. Though Atlas slew the dragon and plucked the apples, another one of Hercules's twelve labours was to slay the Hydra of Lerna, a seven-headed serpent, which he completed successfully with help from his friend Iolaus; see H.A. Guerber, *The Myths of Greece and Rome* (New York: Dover Publications, 2021), pp. 196-201 for the commission of the Hesperian apples and pp. 191-2 for the commission of the Hydra of Lerna. Therefore, Satan is linked to Hercules via his proximity to 'those Hesperian gardens *famed of old*', while Laertes is linked to the Roman god Hercules explicitly.

distance between himself and Hercules, which suggests that Hamlet represents a new hero, but not one that can be expressed concretely – much less delimited – within this tragedy. It is as if *Hamlet* finally gives up on trying to solve its 'problem', as everybody dies at the end and Horatio just re-iterates information that we already have. Eisendrath emphasizes Hamlet's liminal quality in particular, through use of the words 'possibility', 'or', and 'float' in her description of him: 'The prince floats the possibility of his being Hercules or Pyrrhus or Hecuba or even, most suggestively, the actor who plays Hecuba, and finds that he is none of them. So, too, does the audience float different possible meanings of the play, and lands conclusively on none of them'.[99] For Eisendrath, Hamlet 'evades… one-to-one identification'.[100] By contrast, Laertes's eventual association with Hercules, the traditional hero figure, is foreshadowed in Act 1, when Hamlet, in a display that *appears* typical of the revenge tragedy hero, commands his friends to unhand him so that he can follow the Ghost:

> Hold off your hands.…
> My fate cries out
> And makes each petty arture in this body
> As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
> Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen.
> By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!
> I say, away! – Go on. I'll follow thee. (1.4.89-96)

However, according to the editors of the Folger edition of *Hamlet*, the Nemean lion's nerve refers to 'the sinews of the lion killed by Hercules as one of his twelve labors'.[101] Not only does Hamlet acknowledge that he is less courageous than the usual hero – he is not Hercules, but the monstrous lion that Hercules *kills* – but these lines also foreshadow that Laertes, the play's Hercules, will kill Hamlet the lion.[102] Perry's thoughtful analysis

[99] Eisendrath, pp. 599-600.

[100] Ibid., p. 599.

[101] Mowat and Werstine, p. 54 (note to 1.5.93).

[102] In classical myth, the lion was notoriously difficult to kill: 'All warned Hercules of the danger and difficulty of the undertaking, described the failure of countless previous attempts to slay the monster, and prophesied that he would never return alive'; see Guerber, p. 191. In *Hamlet*, Claudius fails to kill Hamlet twice – first, when Claudius sends Hamlet to England with a sealed letter that requests Hamlet's prompt execution (see 4.4.67-77), and second, when Gertrude instead of Hamlet sips from the poisoned cup (see 5.2.306-20) – and Hamlet poisons Laertes after Laertes's rapier poisons him (see 5.2.330 and the accompanying stage directions). For Curran, however, the women in the play (Ophelia and Gertrude) have, 'without meaning to', 'caused unmitigated destruction and made Hamlet a monster' due to the supreme rule of fate (p. 194). For a persuasive discussion of Ophelia playing the role of strumpet Fortune – what

of Hamlet's soliloquy in Act 2 scene 2, lines 577 and following, lends support to my claim that Hamlet represents the monstrous lion – 'monstrous' not only because it cannot be killed, but also because it is cowardly instead of courageous:

> The dual allusiveness of Hamlet's soliloquy – borrowing from [John] Studley's *Hercules Oetaeus* and from *Thyestes* – is anything but obvious, since the Hercules of the pseudo-Senecan play is a triumphant stoic sage while Seneca's Atreus is a profoundly delusional monster. But if we take these two Senecan intertexts together – the condemnation of Philoctetes' weakness and Atreus' propulsive self-castigation – they combine to illuminate much of what Hamlet seems to be experiencing: a desire to whip himself into a vengeful fury combined with a sense of himself as a moral coward.[103]

Hamlet wants to enact revenge, but at the same time, he feels unable to follow through on his desires because of moral quandaries: 'O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!' (2.2.577). Perry observes that this line 'quotes… Studley's rendition of the stoic Hercules' excoriation of the moral weakness of Philoctetes in… *Hercules Oetaeus*: "O *coward*, peasant slave"'.[104] Laertes, in the role of Hercules slaying the lion, wounds Hamlet with a poisoned rapier in Act 5 scene 2, line 330. Near the beginning of Act 5, Hamlet also seems to refer to Laertes as Hercules:

> Hear you, sir,
> What is the reason that you use me thus?
> I loved you ever. But it is no matter.
> Let Hercules himself do what he may,
> The cat will mew, and dog will have his day. (5.1.307-11)[105]

Curran refers to as 'Ophelia's mysterious power-without-agency' (p. 183) – and Gertrude's similar power, see Curran, pp. 192-4.

[103] Perry, p. 80.

[104] Ibid., p. 79 (emphasis added).

[105] Notably, when Hamlet addresses Laertes, 'Hear you, sir' and soon after says, 'Let Hercules himself do what he may', the lines might remind readers of Act 4 scene 3 in William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, where the soldiers believe that they can hear Hercules leaving Antony:

> SECOND SOLDIER
> 'Tis the god Hercules, whom Antony loved,
> Now leaves him.
> FIRST SOLDIER Walk. Let's see if other watchmen
> Do hear what we do. (4.3.21-4)

See William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020). This literary connection strengthens the association between Laertes and

The editors of the Folger edition of *Hamlet* also note, 'Many editors have tried to explain these lines [310-11] as if Hamlet is, for example, referring to Laertes as Hercules and, in the second of the lines, uttering a veiled threat'.[106] However, the editors quickly point to other editorial attempts, such as George Lyman Kittredge's, who writes that these lines '"are not to be brought into logical connection with what precedes or with the situation at all"'.[107] Regardless, Laertes becomes increasingly associated with Hercules, while Hamlet becomes increasingly distanced from Hercules, suggesting that Laertes, like Satan, is a vestige of the traditional revenge tragedy.

Indeed, the play invites readers or viewers to compare Hamlet and Laertes at many points – just as Milton asks us to compare Adam and Satan[108] – in order to highlight the differences between them and, in so doing, show that Laertes's representation of the traditional revenge tragedy hero is in the process of being outmoded.[109] Laertes, like Satan, might look like the hero as model at first glance (both check the boxes for the traditional hero), but eventually it becomes evident that neither is meant to be imitated – not by the protagonist and definitely not by the reader or viewer.[110] While René Girard suggests that Laertes is 'a mimetic model' for Hamlet,[111] and Meek maintains that 'Hamlet's initial assertion of similitude and resemblance gives way to competition and emulation', in that 'Laertes's counterfeit emotions give rise to a real and intense passion in Hamlet, which is not only inspired by but also (paradoxically) more authentic than the original',[112] I will show that Hamlet supersedes Laertes not by outdoing Laertes but by being himself. In other words, Hamlet is *not* supposed to be a better Laertes, though

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Hercules, albeit anachronistically (*Antony and Cleopatra* was first performed around six years after *Hamlet*).

[106] Mowat and Werstine, 'Longer Notes', in *Hamlet*, pp. 289-95 (p. 294 [note to 5.1.310-11]).

[107] Ibid.; Kittredge qtd.

[108] Adam and Satan both have soliloquies (10.720-844 and 4.32-113, respectively). Fallen Adam despairs in his soliloquy, much like Satan does.

[109] The comparison between the two characters comes to a head in Act 5 scene 2, when Hamlet says to Laertes, 'I'll be your foil Laertes; in mine ignorance / Your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night, / Stick fiery off indeed' (5.2.272-4). While 'your foil' means 'the background against which you will shine', the word 'foil', in its literary sense, also refers to a character who contrasts with the protagonist to emphasize specific qualities of the main character; see Mowat and Werstine, p. 274 (note to 5.2.272). For a discussion of Fortinbras as Hamlet's 'double', or someone who shows him how he should be doing his job (that is, a proper patrimony), see Charnes, p. 192.

[110] For Perry, 'Hamlet feels constrained to live up to the imperatives of his dramatic role as avenger, and at different times seems to model himself on his father, on Horatio, and on Laertes' (p. 76).

[111] René Girard, *A Theatre of Envy: William Shakespeare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 276.

[112] Meek, p. 82.

Hamlet thinks he should be and therefore tries to be. In this way, *Hamlet* gives us no one to emulate and undercuts whatever we might take from it, but at the same time suggests that there is something beyond the obsolete forms it uses.

Throughout the play, we are not only invited to compare Hamlet and Laertes, and to observe the differences between them, but also, in so doing, to learn that Laertes's so-called perfection is not to be imitated.[113] In Act 4 scene 5, Laertes, in direct contrast to Hamlet in Act 2 scene 2 (lines 627-32), says to the King,

> To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil!
> Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
> I dare damnation. To this point I stand,
> That both the worlds I give to negligence,
> Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged
> Most throughly for my father. (4.5.149-54)

While Hamlet fears the devil as well as damnation and tries to be moral, Laertes makes vows to 'the blackest devil', rejects his conscience, and exclaims that he 'dare[s] damnation'. Laertes, the traditional revenge tragedy hero, says that he only cares about being revenged for his father.[114] Indeed, in response to the King's query, 'Who shall stay

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[113] In addition to the readers' or viewers' comparison of the two characters, Hamlet and Laertes also explicitly compare themselves to each other. While Laertes says to the King, 'And so have I [like Hamlet] a noble father lost' (4.7.27), Hamlet – in response to Osric saying, 'You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is' (5.2.149-50) – says, 'I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence. But to know a man well were to know himself' (5.2.151-3). In contrast to Hamlet's supposed madness, Laertes is repeatedly – superfluously even – praised as noble and excellent. Hamlet himself tells Horatio, 'That is Laertes, a very noble youth. Mark' (5.1.231). For a discussion of how Fortinbras is 'the most perfect clone in the Shakespearean corpus' because he is the opposite of Hamlet, who, '[i]n his refusal to take up the crown, a wife, the state, and father offspring,… breaks the continuity of production that would enable the dream of patriarchal inevitability to continue', see Charnes, p. 206.

[114] Hamlet's force of feeling in Act 5 scene 1 when Laertes leaps into Ophelia's grave seems to result, if not from the loss of Ophelia, then, more particularly, from the loss of his father, since Hamlet subsequently apologizes to Horatio for forgetting himself because he sees so much of himself in Laertes's situation: see 5.2.85-8. Hamlet's situation is like Laertes's because both have lost a father, and now both have lost Ophelia. However, it is notable that Hamlet and Fortinbras share similarities as well: Charnes observes, 'Frequently noticed is the fact that Fortinbras is in a political situation analogous to Hamlet's: his uncle Norway now sits on his father's throne. But Fortinbras refuses to accept "the same covenant / and carriage of the article designed" (95-7) by his father and King Hamlet' (p. 198); see also 1.1.105-6. Charnes poses the question of whether Fortinbras can be viewed as a model son and concludes, 'Fortinbras makes no claims beyond the recovery of those lands that were by his father lost, demonstrating that he well understands both the spirit and the letter of perpetual entail. To this extent Fortinbras is a model of the path

you?' Laertes replies, 'My will, not all the world' (4.5.155, 156). Hamlet, however, is deeply concerned about the validity of the Ghost's claims and his personal salvation. And yet, when Hamlet and Laertes engage in a fencing match, Laertes momentarily becomes Hamlet-like and delays *because* of his conscience:

> LAERTES, [*to Claudius*]
> My Lord, I'll hit him [Hamlet] now.
> KING I do not think't.
> LAERTES, [*aside*]
> And yet it is almost against my conscience.
> HAMLET
> Come, for the third, Laertes. You do but dally.
> I pray you pass with your best violence.
> I am afeard you make a wonton of me. (5.2.322-7)

Hamlet takes a jab at Laertes's perfection as the traditional revenge hero, telling him to pass with his 'best violence'. Laertes, in a striking moment of almost doubt, says to himself that killing Hamlet is nearly against his conscience. Hamlet may or may not be justifiably accusing Laertes of a delay in his revenge. Regardless, the 'almost' maintains Laertes's so-called perfection as the traditional revenge hero until the very end of the play, when he, in a surprising turn-around of character, begs for mutual forgiveness between himself and Hamlet, despite Hamlet's having murdered Laertes's father: 'Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. / Mine and my father's death come not upon thee. / Nor thine on me' (5.2.361-3). Each of these lines is end-stopped, suggesting Laertes's firm conviction in what he tells Hamlet. Laertes's last word is 'me' followed by a period, rather than a threat of future violence (typical of the revenge hero). By contrast, Hamlet's story exceeds the limits of Shakespeare's longest play (about 30,000 words) when Hamlet, dying, exclaims, 'O God, Horatio, what a wounded name, / Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind / me!' and then, pleadingly, 'in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain / To tell my story' (5.2.378-80, 383-4).[115] Even in Act 5, things are

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Hamlet might take' (p. 200). I choose to focus on Hamlet's connection with Laertes instead because, firstly, Laertes is often overlooked in debates, and secondly, Laertes is not often considered in terms of questions of heroism.

[115] Hamlet is, in a sense, too novel of a character for the drama to contain. I use the word 'novel' on purpose: Hamlet's emotional interiority as a character is more given to the lengthy novel than the compressed, five-act drama. Shakespeare looks forward to Milton's epic, which is dramatic but much more extensive than a five-act play. Notably, Milton rejected the five-act drama (which we know he used in the Trinity Manuscript), choosing the epic instead, which, arguably, could contain his heroes better. Milton could have

unknown, and Hamlet despairs that his story has not been told.[116] However, Laertes's character type in *Hamlet* is – strikingly, I think – tidily concluded.[117]

Conclusion: Modernity's Theological Ground

The constellation of these two hyper-canonical texts reveals that the 'secularism' of Hamlet and Satan that critics such as Bloom have marked as prescient of our modern subjectivities has all along been misleading.[118] *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost* view our modern individualism as a problem, as seen through Hamlet and Satan, whose individualism – again, Hamlet does not balance thoughts and actions (he reflects too much), and Satan's solipsism leads to a denial of all relationality (not only to God, but also to Adam and Eve and others)[119] – results in social isolation.[120] Milton wrote Satan's

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chosen the revenge play that, according to Eliot, was 'in two parts of five acts each' (p. 123) – likely similar in length to Milton's original ten book epic – but he did not.

[116] Indeed, pointing to Act 5 scene 2, lines 366-70, Neill observes, 'Within a few lines Hamlet's distinctive voice, which has dominated his own tragedy like no other Shakespearean hero, will be cut off in midsentence by the arrest of death – and "the rest is silence" (5.2.395)' (pp. 332-3).

[117] Notably, none of the characters mentions or praises Laertes after he has asked for and gained forgiveness from Hamlet. Hamlet, though also dead by the end of the play, for the first time receives a startling amount of praise and honour: Fortinbras proclaims, 'Let four captains / Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage', and then declares, 'for his [Hamlet's] passage, / The soldier's music and the rite of war / Speak loudly for him' (5.2.441-2, 444-6). The soldier's music and the rite of war make little sense for Hamlet, who is consistently portrayed as an intellectual rather than a soldier.

[118] Bloom, citing William Hazlitt, asserts, '"It is we who are Hamlet." Hamlet's stage, Hazlitt implied, is the theater of mind, and Hamlet's gestures therefore are of the inmost self, very nearly everyone's inmost self' (p. 428).

[119] Satan refuses to acknowledge the 'truth' of his own 'genesis' – that is, 'its relationship, its relativity, to God and his commands'; see Dennis Richard Danielson, *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 116. When Satan says to Abdiel, 'That we were formed then say'st thou? and the work / Of secondary hands, by task transferred / From Father to his son? strange point and new!' (5.853-5), Satan rejects the notion that he was made by anyone other than himself and, as a result, he separates his existence from the Father's and the Son's.

[120] This view, while more clearly articulated in *Hamlet* and, later, in *Paradise Lost*, is, however, not new: Perry asserts that 'while the post-romantic idea of Shakespeare sees radical individuation as modern, progressive, and potentially liberatory, the Senecan version is always fraught – it involves the loss of social coordinates and destructive moral isolation instead of a forward-looking emphasis on personal freedom' (p. 4). As a result of Hamlet himself moving further and further away from 'the modesty of / nature' that he lauds before the player (3.2.20-1), he isolates himself from other characters who might help him (such as Ophelia and Laertes) through commiseration and fellowship. Meanwhile, because of his willful separation from God, Satan is repeatedly pictured alone. After his Fall, Satan tells the other devils that 'this enterprise [journey to the new world] / None shall partake with me' and, indeed, he, in direct contrast to Raphael whose flight the fowls observe, 'towards the gates of hell / Explores his solitary flight' (2.465-6, 631-2).

soliloquy (Book 4, lines 1-113) earlier than other parts of the poem and was anticipating it to be part of a tragedy about Satan. Though *Paradise Lost* was first published as 10 books rather than 12, the switch from 10 books to 12 formally suggests the transition from tragedy to epic.[121] As Eisendrath notes, for Augustine the soliloquy has a specific goal: 'The self, in renouncing itself, rediscovers itself as the soul'.[122] In other words, here individualism is not a dead-end but a means to commune with Reason (or an ideal Other) and, in so doing, to know oneself better. However, Hamlet in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Satan in *Paradise Lost* reveal that modern-day individualism will become a dead-end, as illogical as it might sound to us, if it is without a theological ground.[123] Importantly,

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While Satan's social isolation does not, at this point, bother him – he crows to Chaos about his singular bravery: 'from them [the fallen angels] I go / This uncouth errand sole, and one for all / Myself expose, with lonely steps' (2.826-8) – soon after it becomes more emotionally ambiguous. In the next book, the narrator relates, 'The stairs [to Paradise] were then let down, whether to dare / The fiend by easy ascent, or aggravate / His sad exclusion from the doors of bliss' (3.523-5). Satan's broken relationship with God leads to greater social loss, as he is excluded from the beings that live in Paradise. By Book 4, Satan expresses genuine sorrow at his separation from Adam and Eve: in reaction to Adam smiling at and kissing Eve, 'aside the devil turned / For envy, yet with jealous leer malign / Eyed them askance' (4.502-4). In contrast to Satan, fallen Adam and Eve 'hand in hand with wandering steps and slow, / Through Eden took their solitary way' (12.648-9). While Satan is 'lonely' (2.828), Adam and Eve leave Eden together, as one ('hand in hand' and 'solitary'). However, I want to qualify this claim by acknowledging that Adam and Eve, like Satan and Hamlet before him, are isolated from God insofar as they have been removed from Paradise and, consequently, are unable to converse directly with God and His messengers. I agree with Wilson's assertion that Adam and Eve's 'wandering' in the final lines of the poem does not signal the move away from epic form toward romance or the novel, that is, in the sense of romantic love of wandering, but rather, a – in my opinion, *remaining* – feature of tragedy, meant to signal the middle of the human pair's journey (p. 205). After all, by the 'end' of the poem, Adam and Eve have not yet fully demonstrated their Christian epic heroism as Milton redefines it, so their story continues beyond *Paradise Lost*'s final utterance.

[121] For a contrasting viewpoint, see Wilson, who argues, 'It is often said that the generic model shifts in the final books, from tragedy to heroic epic.… But the final books are also just as close to tragedy, as Milton understood it, as books 9 and 10.… The last books are also "tragic" because they… include the description of enormous human suffering, which will feel endless to those who must experience it' (p. 194). Instead of viewing tragedy and epic as *equally* competing genres within the poem, I see a demonstrable shift, albeit slow and measured, from a solipsistic, modern-day individualism to an interpersonal, modern-day individualism with a theological ground – that is, from revenge tragedy to Christian epic. The process of transitioning from one genre to another is simply, and understandably I argue, not clearly demarcated – hence, the vestiges of a previous genre that I have been pointing to and discussing. This is why, as Wilson notes (I agree with her on this point), '"[T]ragic" and "heroic" elements, as defined by this passage [9.5-15], often seem to happen simultaneously: books 9 and 10 have plenty about God's anger, and books 11 and 12 have a great deal about man's suffering and woe' (p. 247).

[122] Eisendrath, p. 587.

[123] In Bloom's reading, Hamlet is not only deeply personal to Shakespeare, for whom he represented Shakespeare's creative self, but also to readers (intellectuals), for whom he represents the modern drive for absolute freedom. My reading, by contrast, is that Hamlet's dead-end demonstrates to readers the necessity

Catherine Bates notes, 'The thinking mind is able to commune with itself in concentrated solitude… only because it remains *in relation* with an ideal Other'.[124] I think that Bates's use of the phrase 'in relation' tells us something about what the modern self requires. Specifically, a more theologically grounded, 'post-secular' modernity does not mean that an individual communes necessarily with God to know themself, but rather that truly intimate, reciprocal relationships could be the new theological ground in a fallen world – hence, for example, Adam and Eve's joint prayers (rather than soliloquies) in *Paradise Lost*.[125]

In summary, while Laertes and Satan look back by representing the revenge tragedy protagonist, Hamlet and Adam and Eve look forward by representing the epic hero (in Hamlet's case, he toes the line between two genres). In *Hamlet*, two literary genres subsist because the revenge tragedy hero is *in the process* of being outmoded by the epic hero. However, the irreconcilability of the two genres means that the reader or viewer is, bewilderingly, left without a hero – neither Hamlet nor Laertes – to imitate. This anomaly is in part why *Hamlet* has proved itself endlessly fascinating. Further, if, as Eisendrath insists, '[l]iterature has come to be viewed as that form of discourse which is a problem to itself and is, in that way, oddly like an individual subjectivity', and '[l]ike no other thing, artworks mimic… the process of a subjectivity that is unreified and in process',[126] then my comparison of Hamlet to Satan is just one exciting puzzle piece in the larger process of rendering a clear picture of our literature as self-reflective – in the words of proto-modern Hamlet, 'Looking before and after' (4.4.39).[127] *Paradise Lost*'s

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of a theological ground for the unbounded consciousness, which, though liberating, is not sustainable without its moderation through dialogue with others. At the end of the play (as I note in an earlier footnote, citing Bloom), Hamlet's seemingly real love for Horatio is undercut, thus severing Hamlet's last social thread in the play and ending Hamlet's life. That the play's emphasis on revenge comes about by chance firmly lodges revenge in the realm of the secular rather than the spiritual or even morally acceptable. Not only does Hamlet stab Laertes with the poisoned rapier by accident (which sets off a chain reaction that leads to Claudius's death), but even after Fortinbras accepts his new role as King, Horatio feels compelled to say that he must immediately perform the act of informing the world of what happened, 'lest more / mischance / On plots and errors happen' (5.2.438-40). The word 'mischance' is set off by itself in the text, thus emphasizing that revenge, rather than bringing peace and correction to Denmark, merely perpetuates existing moral corruption.

[124] Qtd. in Eisendrath, p. 586 (emphasis added).

[125] My finding that some form of theology persists in the modern world means that subsequent genres of literature, such as the novel which supplanted epic, are more theological than previously supposed. Though Ian Watt famously characterized the eighteenth-century novel as an inherently secular or secularizing genre, post-secular criticism has been challenging that argument and, again, my work suggests that a more theologically grounded, 'post-secular' modernity is the real inheritance of *Paradise Lost*.

[126] Eisendrath, pp. 582 and 599.

[127] This self-reflectiveness is different from the problematic one we see in Satan and Hamlet.

transformative reading of *Hamlet* is this process – that is, literature in process – in action. *Paradise Lost* shows that the modern, secularized self does not preclude theology but rather changes what that theology *means*, or how it is imagined.[128] After the Fall, Adam and Eve are removed from God – they must leave Eden behind – but, significantly, they begin their new life together rather than apart.[129] This new emphasis on the importance of one's fellow human suggests a strong affinity between Milton's Renaissance epic and the earliest forms of the novel in the Restoration and Romantic periods, which might be fruitfully explored elsewhere.[130]

[128] For Jonathan Greenaway, 'theological orthodoxy has always been creatively re-imagined outside of the confines of doctrine in response to the changes in circumstance brought about through the progress of history'; see 'Monstrosity and the Problem of Evil: A Theologico-Literary Understanding of Personhood in *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost*', in *Theology, Horror and Fiction: A Reading of the Gothic Nineteenth Century* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), pp. 25-54 (pp. 26-7). Greenaway helpfully points out that this re-imagining is 'less a rejection of theological concerns than an ongoing and constant retelling of these concerns brought about through new stimuli' (p. 27). Thus, the modern novel does not reject theology, but redirects it.

[129] Adam's and Eve's origin stories are not only related separately in the narrative, but they also portray man (and woman) on his own, with just God's voice to guide him. While 'Romantic-era writing… consistently refuses the demand of interpersonal relationship and reaches toward the infinite' (Greenaway, p. 39), postlapsarian Adam and Eve, importantly I think, set out of Eden together, into a world that is further removed from God. Milton's depiction of the Fall, as well as the relationship-related consequences of that fall, anticipate the destructive consequences of the specifically Romantic ideology which 'refuses the demand of interpersonal relationship'.

[130] This situation is similar to George Eliot's 'epic of a world without God [*Middlemarch* (1871)], [where] we have one another'; see Diana Postlethwaite, 'When George Eliot Reads Milton: The Muse in a Different Voice', *ELH* 57.1 (1990), 197-221. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2873251 (p. 218). Importantly, Postlethwaite observes a modern shift 'from the Greek ideal of knowledge as correspondence between mind and form to the Biblical conception of knowing as a process of human relationship' (p. 204). Another work of interest is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Tang Soo Ping's observation that the monster's 'attraction to the condition of a simple joy and kinship… explains his attachment to the De Lacey family', and that this 'simple piety… stems from a keen sense of divine love and care', suggests that Romantic novels such as *Frankenstein* run with or transform *Paradise Lost*'s ideas about the importance of relationships instead of opposing or contradicting them; see '*Frankenstein*, *Paradise Lost*, and "The Majesty of Goodness"', *College Literature* 16.3 (1989), 255-60. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.com/stable/25111826 (p. 256).