

path of Christian in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, who runs away from his wife and children, sticking his fingers in his ears so as not to be able to hear their cries, while crying out Life! Life! Eternal Life! is not Milton's way, though it seems to be the way of many of his critics. Milton's choices are more akin to those of Hugo Grotius, who in his Latin drama *Adamus Exul* (Adam in Exile) of 1601, written while he was in his late teens, portrays the scene of Adam's choice in terms similar to those that will later feature prominently in *Paradise Lost*. After a long debate with Eve, and with his own doubts, Grotius' Adam chooses Eve over God:

Quid est agendum? lubricas agitant duo  
 Curas amores: hinc Dei, atque hinc conjugis:  
 [...]
   
 Quid huic negandum? vilis unius tibi  
 Iactura pomi est. Ut ne contemnam boni  
 Legem parentis? Fallor? an voluit Deus  
 Conjugis amores anteserri caeteris  
 Etiam parentum? Voluit: huc Pommum mihi.<sup>126</sup>

What should I do? A dangerous provocation in two  
 Cares and loves: for God and for my wife:  
 [...]
   
 Which shall I deny? Worthless to you is the loss  
 Of one apple. Should I condemn the good  
 Parental law? Am I mistaken? Is it not God's will  
 That marital love shall be preferred over all others,  
 Even of parents? It is his will: give me the apple.

Later, Adam, amidst his doubts about whether or not he has done the right thing, decides that he will continue to choose Eve no matter the consequences: "What can I deny to you, my wife? / At your bidding, I will condemn the justice of God; / At your bidding, I will go on living."<sup>127</sup>

The consequences follow immediately, of course, so those who not only insist on, but seem to revel in the punishments inflicted on humanity for daring to chart its own course needn't worry overmuch.<sup>128</sup> But the point has been the choice—far more elaborate than the one found in Genesis 3.6:

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<sup>126</sup> Hugo Grotius. *Hugonis Groth Sacra in quibus Adamus exul tragoedia*. (Hague: Alberti Henrici, 1601), Act IV, pp.54-55.

<sup>127</sup> "...quid tibi, cunjux, negen? / Iubente te vel jussa contemnam Dei, / Iubente te vel sustinebo vivere" (Ibid. Act V, p.68).

<sup>128</sup> As Adorno argued in the middle of the last century, authoritarians "want a God to exist as the absolute authority to which they can bow, [and the] concept of God underlying this way of thinking is that of the absolute essence of punitiveness" (Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno. "Studies in the Authoritarian Personality." In T. W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality*, vol. I of *Studies in Prejudice*. Edited by Max Horkheimer and Samuel H. Flowerman (Social Studies Series: Publication No. III). [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950], 444).

וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לַמֵּאֲכָל וְכִי תִאֲוָה הוּא לְעֵינַיִם וְנִחְמָד הָעֵץ לְהַשְׁכִּיל וַתִּקַּח  
מִפְרֵיוֹ וַתֹּאכַל וַתִּתֵּן גַּם לְאִישָׁהּ עִמָּהּ וַיֹּאכַל:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, a tree desirable to look at and gain insight from, she took from its fruit and ate, and gave it also to the man who was with her, and he ate.

Genesis makes little of Adam's choice, and even makes comparatively little of Eve's. There is no tortured questioning, deep soul-searching, or weighing of comparative values. There is desire for the fruit, for the wisdom the fruit was thought to offer, and a quick decision to eat. Eve eats, and gives the fruit to Adam, "who was with her," and he eats as well. No fuss. No muss. But for Grotius, the scene is one of agonizing choices. Similarly, in *L'Adamo*, an Italian play of 1613 by Giambattisti Andreini, Adam's decision to eat the fruit is passionate, agonizing, and lengthy:

Ahi, mi si spezza il core;  
Che far deggia non so; s'io miro il Cielo  
Sento vagarmi un gelo  
Per l'ossa che mi strugge,  
Vago sol d' osservar precetti eterni;  
Se la compagna miro.  
Piango al suo pianto, a' suoi sospir sospiro,  
E mi struggo, e m' accoro,  
S' ubbidirla rifiuto; il cor amante  
Fa eh' al Pomo veloce apra la mano,  
L' alma nel sen dubbiante  
La respinge, e la chiude;  
Misero Adamo, o quanti  
Accampano il tuo i or vari desire!  
Qui per r un tu sospiri,  
Per r altro godi, né saper t' è dato  
Se tu sarà piegato  
Da sospiri o da gioia,  
Da la Donna o da Dio.  
[...]  
Dammi il frutto rapito,  
Rapitrice cortese,  
Dammi ill frutto gradito;  
S'ubidisca a chi tanto,  
Per farmi un Dio.<sup>129</sup>

Alas, it breaks my heart;  
I do not know what to do; if I think of Heaven  
Then I feel a cold tremor

<sup>129</sup> Giambattisti Andreini. *L'Adamo*. Edited by Ettore Allodoli. (Lanciano: Carabba, 1913), 3.1.1839-57, 1907-11.

Oppressing me even in my bones,  
 And I want only to obey the eternal precepts;  
 If I think of my companion,  
 I share her tears and sigh with her sighs;  
 I am tortured and distracted,  
 To refuse her would wound her, and my loving heart  
 Would teach me to sieze the apple with open hands,  
 But my breast is doubtful  
 Rejects, and closes;  
 Miserable Adam, how many  
 And various are the desires that assail your heart!  
 One makes you sigh,  
 Another gives you joy, nor can you know  
 Which will most win you,  
 The sighs or the joy.  
 The woman or God.  
 [...]  
 Give me the stolen fruit,  
 Courteous thief,  
 Give me the pleasing fruit;  
 It is right to obey  
 The one who works to make me a God.

Again, we have an Adam who agonizes over the choice of Eve or God, and whose passion and love for his wife leads him to make the fully human choice of love for another human being over love for a figure who is wholly other, whose benevolence seems always to be insisted on by the very same people who take delight in recounting his punishments for disobedience. Here, as in Grotius, the pious reader need not wait long for the penalties to ensue—but again, the passionate, human choice has already been made, and will not be unmade, no matter the lethal intent of God.

Even in the 1647 Italian play *Adamo Caduto*, by Serafino Della Salandra, Adam's choice is agonizing, but human. At first Adam resists, even remonstrating with Eve the way Gerald Richman would have Adam do in *Paradise Lost*:

Noon si deue piu tosto, ch'una volta  
 Offender Dio, morir ben volte mille?  
 Saprò vestir di rigidezza il volto,  
 Saprò armar il cor'anco di idegno,  
 Donna, nel tuo mal fare.  
 [...]  
 Iniquio è quel che pecca;  
 Ma di gran lunga è biasimevol quello;  
 Ch'è le viste ruine altrui conduce.<sup>130</sup>

Should you not, rather, but once avoid  
 Offending God, than die a thousand times?  
 I'll know how to clothe myself severely,  
 I'll know how to arm my heart with shame,  
 Lady, against your evil machinations.  
 [...]  
 Wicked is the sinner;  
 But far more blameworthy are those  
 That with clear sight lead others to their ruin.

<sup>130</sup> Serafino della Salandra. *Adamo Caduto*. (Cosenza: Gio. Battista Moio, e Francesco Rodella, 1647), 2.10., p.92.

But eventually, Adam begins to realize that he cannot resist his wife: “She weighs on me, in part, making my heart tender; / But the love of Heaven still prevails.”<sup>131</sup> Finally, here, as in every other version of the Edenic story, Adam chooses Eve over God:

Dolce ben mio,	My sweetest,
Cessa dal pianto, non stracciar più l'crine,	Stop your tears, no more tearing your hair,
Che ti prometto di mangiar' il Pomo.	I promise to eat the apple.
[...]	[...]
Ecco delit'ia mia, che'l mangio anch'io. <sup>132</sup>	Behold, my delight, as I eat it too.

An astute reader will have noticed a difference, however, between the three version just dealt with and Milton's rendering in *Paradise Lost*. Where the Adams of Grotius, Andreini, and Salandra agonize over their choices, Milton's Adam knows quietly, inwardly, immediately what he is going to do. For Milton's Adam, the choice is obvious: he will love Eve, and he will choose Eve, despite the God who threatens him with pain and death, despite the willful mishearers and misconstruers of the point like Raphael, and despite the long line of literary critics who would rewrite him into the image of their dry and pious imaginations.

Many of Milton's modern critics seem to read his treatment of Adam's choice, not in light of the seventeenth-century context outlined above, but as if Milton were following the much harsher example of Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus, the sixth-century bishop of Vienne. Avitus' treatment of the scene, far from being sympathetic to the human emotions involved, is an exercise in condemnation:

Accipit infelix malesuadi verba susurri,  
 Inflexosque retro deiecit ad ultima sensus.  
 Non illum trepidi concussit cura pavoris,  
 Nec quantum gustu cunctata est femina primo;  
 Sed sequitur velox, miseraeque ex coniugis ore  
 Constanter rapit inconstans dotale venenum.  
 Faucibus et patulis inimicas porrigit escas.<sup>133</sup>

Unhappily, he accepts the seductive, whispered words,  
 Bent back, hurled down finally from his proper senses.  
 Nor does fear strike him with pain and trembling,  
 Not so much as when the woman first hesitated to taste;  
 But he follows quickly, from his wretched wife's mouth  
 Firmly the unsteady man seizes the poisonous dowry,  
 Stretches wide his mouth, and fills it with the hostile dish.

<sup>131</sup> “M'hàmasso in parte, il cor m'hà in tenerito; / Ma più di quel l'amor del Ciel prevale” (Ibid., p.93).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p.95.

<sup>133</sup> *De Mosaice Historiae Gestis*. 2.254-60. In *S. Aviti, Archiepiscopi Viennensis Opera*. (Paris, 1643), 233.

However, that is not the way Milton treats the scene. His Adam chooses Eve, not because he has been seduced by “whispered words,” and not because he is *inconstans* (weak, unsteady, infirm of purpose, etc.), but because he is faced with the choice between human love and nonhuman (or inhuman) power, and he—like any truly decent man would—chooses the former. To choose the ruler over one’s own wife—that is the kind of choice that authoritarian regimes have always tried to convince their subjects is good, right, and honorable. As Gabriel A. Barhaim notes, a primary feature of such modern regimes is that they have “forced individuals to renounce their private life, and especially to sacrifice their family life.”<sup>134</sup> Sonia Ryang demonstrates the alive-and-well quality of this phenomenon through an analysis of the literature of one such regime, that of North Korea:

Love in North Korean literature is always achieved via the lovers’ devotion for the *suryeong* [the Leader]. They recognize each other’s human worth by measuring and examining the depth, breadth, and, above all, authenticity of the loyalty shown to the sovereign Leader. Without this quality, no one in North Korea is worthy of love or even deserves to live. Every novel, [...] has the *suryeong* at its core (or what North Korean literary theory calls *chongja* or the seed of the story). [...] Love in North Korean literature is perpetually ridden with triangular contradictions, but such triangles link two individuals on the basis of the loyalty each demonstrates for the sovereign. They love each other because the other loves the *suryeong*.<sup>135</sup>

This kind of love, filtered always through adoration for a sovereign (or what Ryang calls “sovereign love”<sup>136</sup>), is the absolute opposite of human love between two lovers who choose each other *for each other*—the kind of love treated by the Song of Songs, Ovid, the troubadours, and Shakespeare. Such “sovereign love” is designed, in fact, to *prevent the possibility* of the kind of human love so many of our literary critics seem curiously determined to dismiss or explain away. The kind of human love celebrated by Shakespeare, called *fin’amor* by the troubadours, and presented in the passionate verse of Ovid’s letter from Dido to Aeneas, and the call-and-response of the Song of Songs encourages those who experience it to choose each other over obedience to any authority, to value each other over any sovereign. But in “sovereign love,” the case is reversed: “romance should only develop if it is between two individuals, both of whom are equally loyal toward the Leader. No private feelings must be prioritized over [...] endless reverence, adoration, and longing for, and loyalty toward, the

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<sup>134</sup> Gabriel A. Barhaim. *Public-Private Relations in Totalitarian States*. (London: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 15.

<sup>135</sup> Sonia Ryang. “Biopolitics or the Logic of Sovereign Love—Love’s Wherabouts in North Korea.” In *North Korea: Toward a Better Understanding*. Edited by Sonia Ryang. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 61, 62.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

Leader,”<sup>137</sup> who is portrayed as “all-sagacious and all-loving” while great emphasis is laid on his “kindness, holiness [and] wisdom.”<sup>138</sup> Even one’s worth as an individual is related solely to the extent of one’s love for, and loyalty toward the sovereign: “[t]he worth of another individual is recognized only when the other person is shown to be as loyal toward the Leader as oneself.”<sup>139</sup> By this latter criterion, a North Korean literary critic (in an environment in which Kim Jong-il is reputed to have said, “I rule through music and literature”<sup>140</sup>) would argue that a man whose wife has been disloyal to the Leader, the sovereign, the *suryeong*, is to abandon her to demonstrate his loyalty: “judgment is made as to whether the self is good or evil based on this criterion: how deeply and how truthfully one loves the Leader.”<sup>141</sup> Such is the way so many Milton critics would have Adam choose. The obvious objection, of course, that will be made (and is often resorted to in other contexts in Milton scholarship) is that it is one thing for a human sovereign to demand one’s total love and loyalty, and quite another for a “divine” sovereign to do the same. In this line of thought, what is left implicit is the assumption that the self-same techniques that are evil and oppressive when used by a human being are good and just (and even loving) when used by a god. Such arguments regard not principle but degree, and those who accept them provide the kind of fertile soil in which, with only a minimum of careful tending, totalitarianism will rarely fail to thrive.

But Milton specifically writes his Adam otherwise. Milton’s Adam—despite his later doubts and accusations—makes the choice (in what Lewis calls “the pinch [in which] a man ought to reject his wife”<sup>142</sup>) specifically *not*

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>140</sup> Jang Jin-sung, *Dear Leader: My Escape from North Korea*. Translated by Shirley Lee. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 3. Writing specifically of the powerful descriptions of *human* love and passion in the poetry of Byron, Jang describes what seems like a revelation:

I read Byron’s epic poems *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and *The Corsair* over and over again in their North Korean translations. *The Corsair’s* ending—the protagonist, a vagabond pirate, disappearing from the island upon learning of his beloved’s death—left me restless, and this agitation lingered with me long after each reading. I had known only loyalty to the Supreme Leader, believing that this was the most sublime emotion a human being could feel. But these poems were proof that emotions could be experienced in a personal sphere that did not include the Leader. This understanding may be taken for granted in the rest of the world, but it was an astounding epiphany for me, and after this realization, I wanted suddenly to confess my love to a woman. I wanted to fall in love, and I wanted to be weak for love. Out of this longing, I began to write poetry of my own. (34)

<sup>141</sup> Ryang, 74.

<sup>142</sup> Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, 123. Hannah Arendt notes that such “pinches” were a feature of Nazi purges that even affected privileged party organizations like the SS: “a Fuehrer decree dated May 19, 1943, ordered that all men who were bound to foreigners by family ties, marriage or friendship were to be eliminated from state, party, Wehrmacht and economy; this affected

to reject his wife; he makes the choice to face death with Eve, rather than reject her, rather than lose her, and rather than indulge any hopes about the mercy of a God who is *not* going to forgive an Eve whom he has already condemned in advance of her choice to eat the fruit. In the eyes of the God so many critics would have Adam approach, it is always already too late:

Man disobeying,  
Disloyal breaks his fealty, and sins  
Against the high Supremacy of Heav'n,  
Affecting God-head, and so losing all,  
To expiate his Treason hath naught left,  
But to destruction sacred and devote,  
He with his whole posteritie must dye,  
Dye hee or Justice must;<sup>143</sup>

This is a serious and deadly speech. There is no mercy to be found therein, nor is there any indication that the speaker is in any way inclined to listen to Adam's (wholly imaginary) intercession. The speech is drawn from Biblical descriptions of genocide:

The very language in which the Father expresses himself in this speech is filled with allusions to death, destruction, and even genocide. In referring to “destruction sacred and devote,” the Father echoes the language of the genocidal slaughters foretold to Moses in the desert, conducted in the land of Canaan by Joshua and his armies, and finished against the Amalekites by Saul and his forces. To be a thing “accursed . . . to the Lord,” as Jericho is to Yahweh at Josh. 6:17, is to be to “destruction sacred and devote”; likewise, to be a nation that God promises to “utterly put out the remembrance of” (Exod. 17:14), and to be a people about whom God gives orders to “utterly destroy all that they have; and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (1 Sam. 15:3) is to be to “destruction sacred and devote.”<sup>144</sup>

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1,200 SS leaders” (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*. [San Diego: Harcourt, 1968], 391 n.7). Here, the decree of Ezra 10:3 also comes to mind:

ועתה גְּרַתְּ-בְּרִית לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ לְהוֹצִיא כָּל-נָשִׁים וְהַגִּיד מֵהֶם  
Now, let us carve out an agreement with our God, to send away our  
foreign wives, and such children as they have borne.

When the “pinch” Lewis refers to comes, are we after all to believe that the moral thing, the humane thing is to abandon anyone our Gods and Dictators demand we abandon? What kind of man, what kind of god, would demand such a thing, and what kind of coward would submit to it? What Lewis, et al, have been on the stump for these last several decades is *precisely* the kind of submission and loyalty to the powerful leader that characterizes the worst tyrannies and brutalities the human race has had on offer throughout its history.

<sup>143</sup> *Paradise Lost* 3.203-10.

<sup>144</sup> Bryson, *The Tyranny of Heaven*, 141.

In fact, the speaker has already decided that the only remedy for a crime that has not yet been committed is to be a human sacrifice:

unless for him  
 Som other able, and as willing, pay  
 The rigid satisfaction, death for death.  
 Say Heav'nly Powers, where shall we find such love,  
 Which of ye will be mortal to redeem  
 Mans mortal crime, and just th' unjust to save,  
 Dwells in all Heaven charity so deare?<sup>145</sup>

All of this, of course, sets the stage for the drama of the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son, a death by torture and slow exposure to the elements, a practice that Martin Hengel describes as an expression of obscene cruelty and sadism toward its victim:

for the men of antiquity, Greeks, Romans, and Jews, the cross was not an indifferent or arbitrary matter, but an absolutely offensive thing, even “obscene” in the original sense of the word. [...] Even in the Roman empire, where the process of executions might be seen as having a standard or “normal” form—it included an initial flogging, and the criminal often carried the crossbar to the place of execution, where his arms were outstretched as he was nailed to the bar—the form of execution was quite variable: *crucifixion was a punishment in which the capriciousness and sadism of the executioner could run wild.*<sup>146</sup>

And here, we come to the darkest truth, and the greatest heroism of the choice Milton creates his Adam to make: it is in the face of a God who demands grotesque torture and death for the crime of disobedience (and the disobedience of relative children, at that), that Milton’s Adam makes his decision for Eve, and for love. Critics like Lewis, Samuel, Fish, Danielson, Teskey, and those who follow them, will never, as Waldock observed, “acknowledge the facts of the poem,” because for them, the power and passion of Adam’s choice pales next to the “should” and “should not” of a prescriptive and obedience-driven rewriting of the poem. The facts are there, however, easily perceived as long as one does not make, as Raphael does, a willful attempt to misunderstand by letting one of

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<sup>145</sup> *Paradise Lost* 3.210–16.

<sup>146</sup> “für die antiken Menschen, Griechen, Römer und Juden, keine gleichgültige, beliebige, sondern eine durchaus anstößige, ja im ursprünglichen Sinne des Worte “obzöne” Sache bedeute. [...] Selbst in römischen Machtbereich, wo der Ablauf der Exekution in gewisser Weise als “genormt” erscheinen konnte—er schloß die vorausgehende Geißelung und häufig auch das Tragen des Balkens zur Richtstätte ein, wo der Delinquent emporgehoben und mit ausgestreckten Händen angenagelt wurde—, blieb die Form der Hinrichtung recht variabel: Die Kreuzigung are eine Strafe, bei der sich die Willkür und der Sadismus der Henker austoben konnten” (Martin Hengel. “Mors Turpissima Crucis: Die Kreuzigung in der Antiken Welt und die ‘Toheit’ des Wortes vom Kreuz.” In *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70 Geburtstag*. Edited by Johannes Friederich, Wolfgang Pöhlmann, and Peter Stuhlmacher. [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1976], 137, 139).

the greatest *Liebestod* scenes in all of world literature fall “on ears which have been deliberately deafened.”<sup>147</sup>

For Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet and critic whose ears were most definitely *not* deliberately deafened, the *mutual* love between Adam and Eve was perhaps the noblest part of *Paradise Lost*:

The love of Adam and Eve in Paradise is of the highest merit—not phantomatic, and yet removed from everything degrading. It is the sentiment of a rational being towards another made tender by a specific difference in that which is essentially the same in both; it is a union of opposites, a giving and receiving mutually of the permanent in either, a completion of each in the other.<sup>148</sup>

Adam’s choice of love in the face of death is of the kind Martin Heidegger describes as “authentic being-toward-death.”<sup>149</sup> Adam is faced with “the nothingness and the possible impossibility of his existence,”<sup>150</sup> which forces him into the position of having to choose, and so he does. Adam chooses himself, life, and Eve over the commands of “the They-self,”<sup>151</sup> the inauthentic self, or the voice of authority. Essentially, it is not until Adam realizes what his life after Eve’s death would mean, and what his own death would mean in turn, that he is able to stand up and say “No.” In choosing death with Eve, Adam chooses a *human* life, a life of love rather than an existence of obedience, a *mortal* life with a necessary end (the only kind that human beings have ever had, despite the theological fantasies which still haunt the modern world), and thus Adam makes the only possible *human* choice, which the poet knows, even if his prosaic interpreters do not. In a sense, Adam makes the same choice that Odysseus makes, who when offered immortality by Calypso, can think only of return to Penelope, whom the goddess describes as “your wife, she that you ever long for daily, in every way.”<sup>152</sup> Perhaps, in the spirit of the easy pronouncements of Lewis, Samuel, Fish, Danielson, Teskey, and countless others, Odysseus should have chosen otherwise. But think how much of poetry we would have lost if he had.

Somehow, all-too-many of our modern critics of Milton can no longer see or hear, so deliberately blind and deaf have they become to the love their poet tried to portray. Such critics, as Maurice Kelley famously observed, are “proof-

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<sup>147</sup> Waldock, 44.

<sup>148</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Vol.1. Edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge. (London: William Pickering, 1836), 177.

<sup>149</sup> “eigentlichen Seins zum Tode” (*Sein und Zeit*, 266).

<sup>150</sup> “dem Nichts der möglichen Unmöglichkeit seiner Existenz” (Ibid).

<sup>151</sup> “das Man-selbst” (Ibid).

<sup>152</sup> “σὴν ἄλοχον, τῆς τ’ αἰὲν ἐέλδεται ἥματα πάντα” (Homer. *Odyssey*, 5.210. Volume I, Books 1-12. Edited by A.T. Murray. [Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1919]).

proof,”<sup>153</sup> and will forever insist on their “homemade brand of orthodoxy”<sup>154</sup> in their rewritings of Milton’s epic. But we needn’t follow them into “wand’ring mazes lost,”<sup>155</sup> wondering about what might have been if only Milton had been inclined to rewrite his poem in order to conform to the tastes and expectations of his more obedience-focused readers. Despite the critics, in *Paradise Lost*, love becomes most fully human. Mortal, and therefore even more precious in the face of death, love becomes the defining feature of a truly human life, chosen, as it seems it must ever be, in disobedience.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Maurice Kelley. “Reply to Hunter.” *SEL* 34 (1994), 159.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Paradise Lost* 2.561.

<sup>156</sup> The spirit of disobedience that is embodied in Milton’s depiction of Adam’s choice will be influential, nearly two centuries later, on the depiction of disobedience as central to human progress in Giosuè Carducci’s “Illo a Satana” of 1865. As the poem closes, Satan is hailed as a powerful symbol of the victory of reason over belief, and independence over obedience:

Salute, o Satana,  
O ribellione,  
O forza vindice  
De la ragione!

Hail, O Satan,  
O rebellion,  
O vindicating force  
Of reason!

Sacri a te salgano  
Gl’incensi e i voti!  
Hai vinto il Geova  
De i sacerdoti.

To you rise up  
The sacred incense and vows!  
You have conquered the Jehovah  
Of the priests.

(*Giosuè Carducci: Poesie*. Edited by William Spaggiari. [Milan: Feltrinelli, 2007], ll.193-200.)

Carducci’s Satan is not a spirit of evil, a force of negation, or a drive toward nothingness. He is the embodiment of human reason as it stands against a reasonless authority that is often justified simply by power, or the obsequious excuses of those who, as Milton describes them, fill “each estate of life and profession, with abject and servil principles” (*The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. London, 1644, Sig. A2r). There is rather more in common between Milton’s and Carducci’s Satans than readers may initially realize.