

## The Verse

[The measure is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek and of Virgil in Latin; rhyme being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame meter; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse than else they would have expressed them.] Not without cause therefore some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rhyme both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of itself, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings, a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming.]

+ in anticorollato canto 1066, la 7. figura del verso  
web (1022-84)

## Book I

### The Argument

This first book proposes, first in brief, the whole subject, man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed: then touches the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent, or rather Satan in the Serpent; who revolting from God, and drawing to his side many legions of angels, was by the command of God driven out of heaven with all his crew into the great deep. Which action passed over, the poem hastes into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his angels now fallen into hell, described here, not in the center (for heaven and earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet accursed) but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos: here Satan with his angels lying on the burning lake, thunderstruck and astonished, after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up him who next in order and dignity lay by him; they confer of their miserable fall. Satan awakens all his legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded; they rise, their numbers, array of battle, their chief leaders named, according to the idols known afterwards in Canaan and the countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining heaven, but tells them lastly of a new world and new kind of creature to be created, according to an ancient prophecy or report in heaven; for that angels were long before this visible creation, was the opinion of many ancient Fathers. To find out the truth of this prophecy, and what to determine thereon he refers to a full council. What his associates thence attempt. Pandemonium the palace of Satan rises, suddenly built out of the deep: the infernal peers there sit in council.

- × Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,

5

I. Argument. *the center*: i.e., of the earth. *heaven and earth*: the created universe. *yet not made*. I.e., chaos and hell existed before the Creation. *utter*: outer, extreme, complete. *Canaan*: Palestine. *Fathers*: early Christian theologians. Cf. CD, I.vii.E. (Passages in Milton's *Christian Doctrine* which, like this one, are cited without reference to the Columbia Edition of Milton's works (CE) can be found in the Backgrounds and Sources section, pp. 304-51. The capital letter in such citations refers to a passage which I

have so marked for easy reference.)

1-5. This statement of subject is full of double meanings: the Hebrew name *Adam* means man; *first* may mean in time and in importance; *fruit* means profit or enjoyment and result or consequence, as well as apple; *mortal* means deadly as well as human. *Eden* means the garden of Eden, or Paradise, but it also means heavenly perfection. *Being* both man and god, Christ was a *greater Adam*.

Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,  
In the beginning how the heav'ns and earth  
Rose out of chaos: or if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.  
And chiefly thou O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first  
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss  
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark

6. With the verb *sing* (meaning "sing through me") Milton invokes the aid of a superhuman inspiration, as did the epic poets before him; but Milton's Muse is not one of the nine pagan Muses—it is an abstraction of the wisdom and power of the Judeo-Christian divinity, identified here as the Muse that inspired Moses, who was then believed to have been the author of the first five books of the Bible. Milton's allusion conflates Moses the law-giver, who received the ten commandments on Mount Horeb (Deut. 4.10) or on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19.20), with Moses the literal shepherd and figurative pastor, and with Moses as a kind of bard, or inspired singer, who may teach the past and reveal the future. See "Truth and Poetry," pp. 400–1.

10–15. By adding that the Muse may prefer to dwell on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, near *Siloa's brook*, Milton invites a comparison with the Greek Muses, who also favored mountains and their nearby fountains or streams. The oracle of Delphi was by the Castalian Spring on the side of Mount Parnassus, sacred to the Muses and to Apollo, the god of light, music, poetry, and prophecy; the *oracle of God* was near a spring (*Siloa's brook*) which was near Mount Zion (*Sion Hill*), where God spoke to his people through priests and prophets. Cf. Isa. 2.3: "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord . . . and he will teach us of his ways . . . for out of Zion shall go forth the law." In Greece the Muses were thought to live also near the spring Hippocrene, on the side of Mount Helicon (*th' Aonian mount*), a spring created by the hoof-stamp of Pegasus, a winged horse that symbolized poetic inspiration because he could fly to the top of Mount Olympus, the home of the gods. The earth, in Milton's time, was believed to be covered with three layers of atmo-

sphere, the second of which ("middle region") reached to the top of mountains. The highest heaven of the pagan gods, Mount Olympus, was in the *middle air* (see 514–7); and it is above this region that Milton's Pegasus must carry him on his *no middle flight*, since Milton intends to sing of true heaven, which is far above the universe. See "Universe," pp. 389–91. *pursues*: tries to accomplish.

16. This line is a translation of a line in Ariosto's Renaissance epic *Orlando Furioso*. Milton is not boasting; he is emphasizing the greatness and seriousness of his undertaking—a heroic poem that makes the ways of God seem just—a poem that makes man's fate seem reasonable and psychologically satisfying, an epic in which the hero is not an active warrior but patient, or suffering, mankind, including the first and second Adams.

17–22. *And chiefly thou O Spirit* may not refer to the same being as the Heavenly Muse, but the difference, if any, is slight. Here Milton emphasizes the creative power and wisdom needed for such great undertakings as creating the world and writing this definitive poem, and he calls, not upon the third person of the Trinity, but upon God. *Dove-like*. In the Gospels the Holy Spirit is said to have assumed the shape of a dove when it descended to earth. *sat'st*. The King James Version reads (Gen. 1.2) "moved," but the original Hebrew word means "hovered" or "brooded." *Abyss* (Gk *abyssos* without bottom) is a synonym for "the deep" of Gen. 1.2. *Vast* implies "waste" as well as "large," and helps to suggest the chaos out of which Milton says the world was made. *Brooding* . . . *mad'st it pregnant* is not, according to Fowler, a mixed metaphor, but "a deliberate allusion to the Hermetic doctrine that God is both masculine and feminine."

illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the highth of this great argument  
I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men. 25

Say first, for heav'n hides nothing from thy view  
Nor the deep tract of hell, say first what cause  
Moved our grand parents in that happy state,  
Favored of Heav'n so highly, to fall off  
From their Creator, and transgress his will  
For one restraint, lords of the world besides?  
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?  
Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile  
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived  
The mother of mankind, what time his pride  
Had cast him out from heav'n, with all his host  
Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring  
To set himself in glory above his peers,  
He trusted to have equaled the Most High,  
If he opposed; and with ambitious aim  
Against the throne and monarchy of God  
Raised impious war in heav'n and battle proud  
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power  
Hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky  
With hideous ruin and combustion down  
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell  
In adamant chains and penal fire,  
Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.  
Nine times the space that measures day and night  
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew  
Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf  
Confounded though immortal: but his doom  
Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought  
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain 55

24. *to the highth of*: as far as is possible by means of. *argument*: L *argumentum* the part of a proof that rests on facts (as distinct from *ratio*, the part that depends on reason); a sign by which something is known. Though the word means also "theme" or "subject," Milton refers here to the narrative of the poem.

25. *assert*: (L *asserere* to put one's hand on the head of a slave to set him free or protect or defend him) take the part of, champion. *Eternal*: without beginning or end. *Providence*: (L *pro* before + *videre* to see; foresight) foreknowing, beneficent, and efficient concern. Cf. CD, I.viii.A, B, and C, and other uses of the word in the poem: I.162; II.559; XII.564, 647.

28. *what cause*. This opening question is an epic convention. Homer and Virgil both began by asking the Muse to tell which gods (or why a god) had caused the events of the story.

29. *grand*: supremely deserving of the title (equivalent to the prefix *arch-*).

32. *For*: because of. *besides*: otherwise. 34–49. Cf. Isa. 14.12–15, p. 375, and Rev. 20.1–2, p. 386.

43. *impious*. The L word means disrespectful of one's parents or one's country as well as of one's god.

45. *ethereal*: (Gk *aithein* to ignite, blaze) of the ether, the element supposed to fill the outer regions of the universe; not earth, air, fire, or water, it was not earthly but heavenly, and eternal.

46. This image of a meteorite is more distinct in the description of Satan's fall at 745 ("like a falling star"). *hideous*: Causing dread or horror. *ruin*: (L *ruere* to fall violently) ruins, rubble; fall, destruction. *combustion*. Cf. *combustible*, line 233.

53. *confounded*: (L *con* together + *fundere* to pour; *confundere* to mix up, confuse) ruined, routed; spoiled, corrupted.

53. *doom*: sentence of punishment.



Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes  
That witnessed huge affliction and dismay  
Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate:  
At once as far as angels ken he views  
The dismal situation waste and wild,  
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible  
Served only to discover sights of woe,  
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
That comes to all; but torture without end  
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed  
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed:  
Such place Eternal Justice had prepared  
For those rebellious, here their prison ordained  
In utter darkness, and their portion set.  
As far removed from God and light of heav'n  
As from the center thrice to th' utmost pole.  
O how unlike the place from whence they fell!  
There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelmed  
With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,  
He soon discerns, and weltring by his side  
One next himself in power, and next in crime,  
Long after known in Palestine, and named  
Beëlzebub. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,  
And thence in heav'n called Satan, with bold words  
Breaking the horrid silence thus began.

SATAN  
A  
BEELZEBU'

"If thou beest he; but O how fall'n! how changed

56. *baleful*: full of suffering; of pernicious influence.

57. *witnessed*: expressed, revealed.

60. *dismal*: calamitous, as well as depressingly dark.

63. *darkness visible*. Cf. Job 10.20-22: "Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

68. *Still*: constantly. *urges*: stimulates, excites, provokes. The idea is antithetical to that of *rest*, and the word was often used in a context of fire, as in "urge like fire."

70. *Such place*. The biblical authority for Milton's location and description of hell is cited in CD, Lxxxiii.D.

72. *utter darkness*. Speaking of the faith of some gentiles and the lack of faith among his own people, Christ said (Matt. 8.11-12): "Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children [who were born to the kingdom—

(NEB)] shall be cast out into outer darkness [the place of wailing—(NEB)] and gnashing of teeth."

73-74. From hell to earth (*the center*) is twice as far as from earth to heaven, which lies just beyond the outer shell of the universe. *utmost pole*: the end of the axis of the universe. See "Universe," pp. 389-91.

78. *weltring*: rolling in the waves.

81. *Beëlzebub* is called "the prince of the devils" in Matt. 12.24, and the name may have been a synonym for Satan. Its meaning, "lord of the flies," suggests a mythical origin in the worship of a god who delivered men from insects or of one who was himself infested by flies (Hughes). But according to Fowler, Milton's portrayal of him "seems rather to be based on an allegorization invented by St. Jerome," in which the fly is a symbol of pertinacity. Beëlzebub "never ceases to infest the human race in every way."

82. *Satan*: the Hebrew word for adversary.

84. Cf. Isa. 14.12: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"

From him, who in the happy realms of light  
Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine  
Myriads though bright: if he whom mutual league,  
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope  
And hazard in the glorious enterprise,  
Joined with me once, now misery hath joined  
In equal ruin: into what pit thou seest  
From what highth fall'n, so much the stronger proved  
He with his thunder: and till then who knew  
The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those,  
Nor what the potent victor in his rage  
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,  
Though changed in outward luster, that fixed mind  
And high disdain, from sense of injured merit,  
That with the mightiest raised me to contend,  
And to the fierce contention brought along  
Innumerable force of Spirits armed  
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,  
His utmost power with adverse power opposed  
In dubious battle on the plains of heav'n,  
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost; the unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield:  
And what is else not to be overcome?  
That glory never shall his wrath or might  
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
With suppliant knee, and deify his power  
Who from the terror of this arm so late  
Doubted his empire, that were low indeed,  
That were an ignominy and shame beneath  
This downfall; since by fate the strength of gods  
And this empyreal substance cannot fail,  
Since through experience of this great event  
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,  
We may with more successful hope resolve  
To wage by force or guile eternal war  
Irreconcilable, to our grand foe,  
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy  
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of heav'n."  
So spake th' apostate angel, though in pain,  
Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair:

98. *injured*: done an injustice to. *merit*: just claim to reward.

107. *study of*: application of thought to; zealous effort to achieve.

109. I.e.: What else does 'not being overcome' mean?

114. *Doubted*: feared for.

116. *fate*. PL is a Christian definition of fate as Providence, but Satan thinks of fate as a power greater than God. Cf. CD, I.ii.A, and other uses of the word in

the poem: I.133; II.197, 232, 393, 550, 559, 560, 809; III.120; V.527; VI.869; IX.689, 885, 927; X.265, 480; XI.181. *Gods*. It is true that God refers to the angels as *gods* (III.341), but Satan's intent here may be to suggest that God is just another angel.

117. *empyreal*: (Gk *empyros* in fire, fiery) of the empyrean, the highest heaven; heavenly. See "Universe," pp. 389-91.

See note 850 -  
 "The key of this infernal pit by due,  
 And by command of heav'n's all-powerful King  
 I keep, by him forbidden to unlock  
 These adamant gates; against all force  
 Death ready stands to interpose his dart,  
 Fearless to be o'ermatched by living might.  
 But what owe I to his commands above  
 Who hates me, and hath hither thrust me down  
 Into this gloom of Tartarus profound,  
 To sit in hateful office here confined,  
 Inhabitant of heav'n, and heav'nly-born,  
 Here in perpetual agony and pain,  
 With terrors and with clamors compassed round  
 Of mine own brood, that on my bowels feed:  
 Thou art my father, thou my author, thou  
 My being gav'st me; whom should I obey  
 But thee, whom follow? Thou wilt bring me soon  
 To that new world of light and bliss, among  
 The gods who live at ease, where I shall reign  
 At thy right hand voluptuous, as befits  
 Thy daughter and thy darling, without end."

Thus saying, from her side the fatal key,  
 Sad instrument of all our woe, she took;  
 And towards the gate rolling her bestial train,  
 Forthwith the huge portcullis high up drew,  
 Which but herself not all the Stygian powers  
 Could once have moved; then in the key-hole turns  
 Th' intricate wards, and every bolt and bar  
 Of massy iron or solid rock with ease  
 Unfastens: on a sudden open fly  
 With impetuous recoil and jarring sound  
 Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate  
 Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook  
 Of Erebus. She opened, but to shut  
 Excelled her power; the gates wide open stood,  
 That with extended wings a bannered host  
 Under spread ensigns marching might pass through  
 With horse and chariots ranked in loose array;  
 So wide they stood, and like a furnace mouth  
 Cast forth redounding smoke and ruddy flame.

850. due: right.

865. obey: L oboedire, ob towards + oedire (akin to audire to hear). This, the first occurrence of a word and idea central to the plot, is a clue to the meaning of obedience, i.e., an attitude and behavior of a creature towards its creator, of children to parents. See CD, I.x.A, and cf. other uses of obey, obedient, and obedience: III.95, 107, 190, 191, 269; IV.428, 520, 636; V.501, 514, 522, 537, 551, 806; VI.185, 740, 741, 902; VII.48, 159, 498; VIII. 240, 325, 634; IX.368, 570, 701; X.14, 145; XI.112;

XII.126, 397, 403, 408, 561.

868-70. Cf. the Nicene creed: "We believe in . . . one Lord Jesus Christ . . . who . . . sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and . . . of whose kingdom there shall be no end."

875. powers: army.

877. wards: the matching grooves and notches on keys and in locks.

883. Erebus: primeval Darkness, son of Chaos and brother of Night (894); hell.

889. redounding: billowing.

Before their eyes in sudden view appear  
 The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark  
 Illimitable ocean without bound,  
 Without dimension, where length, breadth, and highth,  
 And time and place are lost; where eldest Night  
 And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold  
 Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise  
 Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.  
 For Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry, four champions fierce  
 Strive here for maistry, and to battle bring  
 Their embryon atoms; they around the flag  
 Of each his faction, in their several clans,  
 Light-armed or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift or slow,  
 Swarm populous, unnumbered as the sands  
 Of Barca or Cyrene's torrid soil,  
 Levied to side with warring winds, and poise  
 Their lighter wings. To whom these most adhere,  
 He rules a moment; Chaos umpire sits,  
 And by decision more embroils the fray  
 By which he reigns: next him high arbiter  
 Chance governs all. Into this wild abyss,  
 The womb of Nature and perhaps her grave,  
 Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,  
 But all these in their pregnant causes mixed  
 Confus'dly, and which thus must ever fight,  
 Unless th' Almighty Maker them ordain  
 His dark materials to create more worlds,  
 Into this wild abyss the wary Fiend  
 Stood on the brink of hell and looked a while,  
 Pondering his voyage; for no narrow frith  
 He had to cross. Nor was his ear less pealed  
 With noises loud and ruinous (to compare  
 Great things with small) than when Bellona storms,  
 With all her battering engines bent to raze  
 Some capital city; or less than if this frame  
 Of heav'n were falling, and these elements  
 In mutiny had from her axle torn  
 The steadfast earth. At last his sail-broad vans  
 He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke

891. hoary deep: greyish white ocean. Cf. the description of the wake of the leviathan in Job 41.32: "one would think the deep to be hoary" or (NEB) "like white hair."

898-906. In the simile, countless atoms are enlisted to serve the four warring elements of fire, earth, water, and air, just as countless particles of sand are enlisted by the warring winds of the desert to serve them by lending weight (poise) or force to the warring winds. Barca, Cyrene: cities in North Africa. embryon: undeveloped.

912. Not the four elements, but what

they came from.

919. frith: firth, an estuary, where the meeting of a river current and an ocean tide makes the waters turbulent and dangerous (cf. boiling gulf, 1027). Chaos was like a firth, but not narrow.

920. pealed: assailed, dinned.

922. Bellona: goddess of war.

924. frame: structure, fabric; also order, plan, scheme, system. A common synonym for universe.

927. vans: (L vannus fan for winnowing grain) fans. The sails of windmills were called "vans" or "vanes."

ic caos 890

895

900

905

910

915

920

925

Caos = to generate

Chance = first voyage

FRAGORE ASSON  
 DANTE

pealed



Girt with the river Triton, where old Cham,  
Whom Gentiles Ammon call and Libyan Jove,  
Hid Amalthea and her florid son  
Young Bacchus from his stepdame Rhea's eye;  
Nor where Abassin kings their issue guard,  
Mount Amara, though this by some supposed  
True Paradise under the Ethiop line  
By Nilus' head, enclosed with shining rock,  
A whole day's journey high, but wide remote  
From this Assyrian garden, where the Fiend  
Saw undelighted all delight, all kind  
Of living creatures new to sight and strange:  
Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,  
God-like erect, with native honor clad  
In naked majesty seemed lords of all,  
And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine  
The image of their glorious Maker shone,  
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure,  
Severe but in true filial freedom placed;  
Whence true authority in men; though both  
Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;  
For contemplation he and valor formed,  
For softness she and sweet attractive grace,  
He for God only, she for God in him:  
His fair large front and eye sublime declared  
Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks  
Round from his parted forelock manly hung  
Clust'ring, but not beneath his shoulders broad:  
She as a veil down to the slender waist  
Her unadorned golden tresses wore  
Disheveled, but in wanton ringlets waved  
As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied  
Subjection, but required with gentle sway,  
And by her yielded, by him best received,  
Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,  
And sweet reluctant amorous delay.

worshipped in N. Africa), king of Libya and husband of Rhea, hid Bacchus, his son by the nymph Amalthea, on the fabulously beautiful island Nysa (whence the name Dionysus). Ammon (or Hammon) was thought in Milton's time to have been Noah's son Ham (or Cham). florid: (L floridus blooming), healthy, beautiful, rosy-complexioned.

280-84. Abassin: Abyssinian. Ethiop line: the equator. Nilus' head: head of the Nile.

300. large front: broad forehead. subline: not downcast.

301-11. Cf. 1 Cor. 11.7-15: "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of

the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. . . . Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature . . . teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering." hyacinthine: curled in the form of hyacinth petals—as in some classical sculpture; an epithet from Homer. Disheveled: let down. wanton: luxuriant, unrestrained. required: asked for by right of authority (sway). sway: controlling influence. coy: (L quietus quiet) modest. reluctant: L reluctant to struggle against.

Nor those mysterious parts were then concealed,  
Then was not guilty shame, dishonest shame  
Of nature's works, honor dishonorable,  
Sin-bred, how have ye troubled all mankind  
With shows instead, mere shows of seeming pure,  
And banished from man's life his happiest life,  
Simplicity and spotless innocence.  
So passed they naked on, nor shunned the sight  
Of God or angel, for they thought no ill:  
So hand in hand they passed, the loveliest pair  
That ever since in love's embraces met,  
Adam the goodliest man of men since born  
His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve.  
Under a tuft of shade that on a green  
Stood whispering soft, by a fresh fountain side  
They sat them down, and after no more toil  
Of their sweet gard'ning labor than sufficed  
To recommend cool Zephyr, and made ease  
More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite  
More grateful, to their supper fruits they fell,  
Nectarine fruits which the compliant boughs  
Yielded them, sidelong as they sat recline  
On the soft downy bank damasked with flow'rs:  
The savory pulp they chew, and in the rind  
Still as they thirsted scoop the brimming stream;  
Nor gentle purpose, nor endearing smiles  
Wanted, nor youthful dalliance as beseems  
Fair couple, linked in happy nuptial league,  
Alone as they. About them frisking played  
All beasts of th' earth, since wild, and of all chase  
In wood or wilderness, forest or den;  
Sporting the lion ramped, and in his paw  
Dandled the kid; bears, tigers, ounces, pards  
Gamboled before them; th' unwieldy elephant  
To make them mirth used all his might, and wreathed  
His lithe proboscis; close the serpent sly  
Insinuating, wove with Gordian twine  
His braided train, and of his fatal guile  
Gave proof unheeded; others on the grass  
Couched, and now filled with pasture gazing sat,

312. mysterious. Cf. 743, and see 750n.

313. dishonest: unchaste.

329. recommend: make attractive. Zephyr: west wind, the wind of spring and fecundity.

330. easy: comfortable.

332. Nectarine: Gk nektar, the drink of the gods. compliant: L plicare to bend.

334. damasked: ornamental in variegated patterns.

337. gentle: OF gentil well-born, polite, refined. purpose: conversation.

338. Wanted: were lacking. dalliance: amorous play.

341. chase: literally, a tract of unclosed land used as a game preserve; here, a place where animals live.

343. ramped: stood rampant—on his hind legs.

344. ounces: lynxes. pards: leopards.

348. Insinuating: (L insinuare to bend, curve) worming his way. Gordian twine: a twining, twisting motion as intricate and subtle as the Gordian knot.

Free leave so large to all things else, and choice  
 Unlimited of manifold delights: 435  
 But let us ever praise him, and extol  
 His bounty, following our delightful task  
 To prune these growing plants, and tend these flow'rs,  
 Which were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet."  
 To whom thus Eve replied. "O thou for whom 440  
 And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh,  
 And without whom am to no end, my guide  
 And head, what thou hast said is just and right.  
 For we to him indeed all praises owe,  
 And daily thanks, I chiefly who enjoy 445  
 So far the happier lot, enjoying thee  
 Preeminent by so much odds, while thou  
 Like consort to thyself canst nowhere find.  
 That day I oft remember, when from sleep  
 I first awaked, and found myself reposed 450  
 Under a shade on flowers, much wond'ring where  
 And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.  
 Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound  
 Of waters issued from a cave and spread  
 Into a liquid plain, then stood unmoved 455  
 Pure as th' expanse of heav'n; I thither went  
 With unexperienced thought, and laid me down  
 On the green bank, to look into the clear  
 Smooth lake, that to me seemed another sky.  
 As I bent down to look, just opposite, 460  
 A shape within the wat'ry gleam appeared  
 Bending to look on me, I started back,  
 It started back, but pleased I soon returned,  
 Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks  
 Of sympathy and love; there I had fixed 465  
 Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire,  
 Had not a voice thus warned me, 'What thou seest,  
 What there thou seest fair creature is thyself,  
 With thee it came and goes: but follow me,  
 And I will bring thee where no shadow stays 470  
 Thy coming, and thy soft embraces, he  
 Whose image thou art, him thou shalt enjoy  
 Inseparably thine, to him shalt bear  
 Multitudes like thyself, and thence be called  
 Mother of human race: what could I do, 475  
 But follow straight, invisibly thus led?  
 Till I espied thee, fair indeed and tall,

440. *Eve*. Cf. Gen. 3.20: "And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living." The root of the Hebrew word means "to live."

441. Cf. Gen. 2.23, p. 354.

443. Cf. 1 Cor. 11.3: "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the

woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

447. *so much odds*: such a great amount in excess.

450. *reposed*: reclining, resting.

470. *stays*: awaits.

476. *straight*: at once.

Under a platan, yet methought less fair,  
 Less winning soft, less amiably mild, 480  
 Than that smooth wat'ry image; back I turned,  
 Thou following cried'st aloud, 'Return fair Eve,  
 Whom flit'st thou? Whom thou flit'st, of him thou art,  
 His flesh, his bone; to give thee being I lent  
 Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart  
 Substantial life, to have thee by my side 485  
 Henceforth an individual solace dear;  
 Part of my soul I seek thee, and thee claim  
 My other half: with that thy gentle hand  
 Scized mine, I yielded, and from that time see  
 How beauty is excelled by manly grace 490  
 And wisdom, which alone is truly fair."  
 So spake our general mother, and with eyes  
 Of conjugal attraction unproved,  
 And meek surrender, half embracing leaned  
 On our first father, half her swelling breast 495  
 Naked met his under the flowing gold  
 Of her loose tresses hid: he in delight  
 Both of her beauty and submissive charms  
 Smiled with superior love, as Jupiter  
 On Juno smiles, when he impregns the clouds 500  
 That shed May flowers; and pressed her matron lip  
 With kisses pure: aside the Devil turned  
 For envy, yet with jealous leer malign  
 Eyed them askance, and to himself thus plained.  
 "Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two 505  
 Imparadised in one another's arms  
 The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill  
 Of bliss on bliss, while I to hell am thrust,  
 Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire, 510  
 Among our other torments not the least,  
 Still unfulfilled with pain of longing pines;  
 Yet let me not forget what I have gained  
 From their own mouths; all is not theirs it seems:  
 One fatal tree there stands of Knowledge called,  
 Forbidden them to taste: Knowledge forbidden? 515  
 Suspicious, reasonless. Why should their Lord  
 Envy them that? Can it be sin to know,  
 Can it be death? And do they only stand  
 By ignorance, is that their happy state,  
 The proof of their obedience and their faith? 520  
 O fair foundation laid whereon to build  
 Their ruin! Hence I will excite their minds  
 With more desire to know, and to reject

478. *platan*: plane tree.

486. *individual*: inseparable.

492. *general*. Cf. *our general sire*, 144.

493. *unproved*: unprovable.

500. *impregns*: impregnates.

501. *matron*: here an adjective; wifely.

503. *jealous*: lustful; covetous.

511. *Still*: always. *pines*: is consumed (the metaphor of Tantalus).

517. *Envy*: begrudge.



Envious commands, invented with design  
 To keep them low whom knowledge might exalt 525  
 Equal with gods; aspiring to be such,  
 They taste and die: what likelier can ensue?  
 But first with narrow search I must walk round  
 This garden, and no corner leave unspied;  
 A chance but chance may lead where I may meet 530  
 Some wand'ring Spirit of heav'n, by fountain side,  
 Or in thick shade retired, from him to draw  
 What further would be learnt. Live while ye may,  
 Yet happy pair; enjoy, till I return,  
 Short pleasures, for long woes are to succeed." 535  
 So saying, his proud step he scornful turned,  
 But with sly circumspection, and began  
 Through wood, through waste, o'er hill, o'er dale his roam.  
 Meanwhile in utmost longitude, where heav'n  
 With earth and ocean meets, the setting sun 540  
 Slowly descended, and with right aspect  
 Against the eastern gate of Paradise  
 Leveled his evening rays: it was a rock  
 Of alabaster, piled up to the clouds,  
 Conspicuous far, winding with one ascent 545  
 Accessible from earth, one entrance high;  
 The rest was craggy cliff, that overhung  
 Still as it rose, impossible to climb.  
 Betwixt these rocky pillars Gabriel sat  
 Chief of th' angelic guards, awaiting night; 550  
 About him exercised heroic games  
 Th' unarmed youth of heav'n, but nigh at hand  
 Celestial armory, shields, helms, and spears  
 Hung high with diamond flaming, and with gold.  
 Thither came Uriel, gliding through the even 555  
 On a sunbeam, swift as a shooting star  
 In autumn thwarts the night, when vapors fired  
 Impress the air, and shows the mariner  
 From what point of his compass to beware  
 Impetuous winds: he thus began in haste. 560  
 "Gabriel, to thee thy course by lot hath giv'n  
 Charge and strict watch that to this happy place  
 No evil thing approach or enter in;  
 This day at highth of noon came to my sphere  
 A Spirit, zealous, as he seemed, to know 565  
 More of th' Almighty's works, and chiefly man  
 God's latest image: I described his way  
 Bent all on speed, and marked his airy gait;

530. *A chance but chance*: there is a chance that luck. . .

541. *with right aspect*: at right angles to.

544. *alabaster*: alabaster; a white, translucent marble, veined with colors.

549. *Gabriel*. See "Angels," p. 395.

557. *thwarts*: passes across.

558. *Impress*: exert pressure upon.

567. *described*: described, observed. way: course.

568. *gait*: variation of gate path (archaic).

But in the mount that lies from Eden north,  
 Where he first lighted, soon discerned his looks 570  
 Alien from heav'n, with passions foul obscured:  
 Mine eye pursued him still, but under shade  
 Lost sight of him; one of the banished crew  
 I fear, hath ventured from the deep, to raise 575  
 New troubles; him thy care must be to find."  
 To whom the winged warrior thus returned:  
 "Uriel, no wonder if thy perfect sight,  
 Amid the sun's bright circle where thou sitt'st,  
 See far and wide: in at this gate none pass 580  
 The vigilance here placed, but such as come  
 Well known from heav'n; and since meridian hour  
 No creature thence: if Spirit of other sort,  
 So minded, have o'erleaped these earthy bounds  
 On purpose, hard thou know'st it to exclude 585  
 Spiritual substance with corporeal bar.  
 But if within the circuit of these walks,  
 In whatsoever shape he lurk, of whom  
 Thou tell'st, by morrow dawning I shall know."  
 So promised he, and Uriel to his charge  
 Returned on that bright beam, whose point now raised 590  
 Bore him slope downward to the sun now fall'n  
 Beneath th' Azorès; whether the prime orb,  
 Incredible how swift, had thither rolled  
 Diurnal, or this less voluble earth 595  
 By shorter flight to th' east, had left him there  
 Arraying with reflected purple and gold  
 The clouds that on his western throne attend:  
 Now came still evening on, and twilight gray  
 Had in her sober livery all things clad; 600  
 Silence accompanied, for beast and bird,  
 They to their grassy couch, these to their nests  
 Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;  
 She all night long her amorous descant sung;  
 Silence was pleased: now glowed the firmament 605  
 With living sapphires: Hesperus that led  
 The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon  
 Rising in clouded majesty, at length  
 Apparent queen unveiled her peerless light,  
 And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw. 610  
 When Adam thus to Eve: "Fair consort, th' hour  
 Of night, and all things now retired to rest  
 Mind us of like repose, since God hath set  
 Labor and rest, as day and night to men  
 Successive, and the timely dew of sleep

572. *shade*: trees forming shade.

592. *prime orb*: *primum mobile*; see "Universe," p. 390.

594. *Diurnal*: daily. *voluble*: able to

move quickly.

603. *descant*: a strain of melody, sung by a soprano voice.

605. *Hesperus*: the Evening Star.

Uriel  
 arrive  
 Gabriel

ALCA  
 CA  
 SENA

SORGE  
 CA  
 LUNA

A. in the  
 E. al  
 W. 300