



Stephen B. Dobranski
Distinguished Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies
Georgia State University
sbdobranski@gsu.edu

What Do Adam and Eve Look Like after the Fall, and Why Does It Matter?

Milton in *Paradise Lost* emphasizes the glorious shapes of Adam and Eve as soon as they stride into the poem. Adam's "fair large front and eye sublime declared / Absolute rule," and Eve "as a veil down to the slender waist / Her unadornèd golden tresses wore / Dishevelled" (IV.300-01, 304-06). Eve in particular is physically powerful; her "Beauty, . . . waking or asleep, / Shot forth peculiar graces" (V.14-15), and when she encounters Satan, "her every air / Of gesture" momentarily renders him good (IX.459-60).

This paper focuses on how and why Adam and Eve's appearance changes after they disobey God. The pair's postlapsarian perception of their physical selves underscores their diminished state: they now gaze at each other amorously, then attempt to cover "Those middle parts" that their shame reproaches them as unclean (IX.1098). But an analysis of Milton's visual imagery in light of his materialist philosophy also points up a prelapsarian empiricism from which Adam and Eve are now permanently sundered. Words such as "Defaced" and "discount'nanced" imply that the couple lose some of their identity when they lose paradise. God as punishment re-aligns the planets, creates ruinous weather, and produces earthquakes, tidal waves, and volcanoes. But what happens to beauty after the Fall?

Short Bibliography

Theodore Howard Banks, *Milton's Imagery* (New York: Columbia UP, 1950).

Roland Mushat Frye, *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978). Stephen Hequembourg, "Monism and Metaphor: The Rhetoric of Early Modern Materialism," *Milton Studies* (2011): 139-67.

John Leonard, *Naming in Paradise: Milton and the Language of Adam and Eve* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990).

Diane Kelsey McColley, *Milton's Eve* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1983).

Joad Raymond, *Milton's Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).

Arnold Stein, *Answerable Style: Essays on "Paradise Lost"* (Minneapolis: U of Minneapolis P, 1953).

James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

Dr. Dobranski is the author of *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (2005), winner of the SAML A Studies Award; *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (1999); and *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton: "Samson Agonistes"* (2009), winner of the John T. Shawcross Award. He also co-edited *Milton and Heresy* (1998) and edited *Milton in Context* (2010), both winners of the Irene Samuel Memorial Award. He has received both a Pforzheimer Fellowship from the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center and a Seminar Fellowship to the Texas Institute for Literary and Textual Studies. Most recently, he completed *The Cambridge Introduction to Milton* (2012). His articles on early modern literature have appeared in various multi-authored collections as well as *ELR*, *Milton Quarterly*, *Milton Studies*, *Modern Philology*, *PMLA*, *RES*, *The Seventeenth Century*, and *SEL*.