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An Alternative to Divine Omniscience: John Milton’s Chaos and Night

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John Milton’s epic poem *Paradise Lost*

➢ I have chosen the characters of Satan, Adam, and Eve in relation to the other characters Chaos and Night.

➢ The latter are never seen interacting with any of the other characters in a physical way, yet their presence is still felt and seen within the narrative. The absence of interaction shows the important roles Chaos and Night play within the poem as representing the “other.”

The otherness within Milton’s narrative, Chaos and Old Night

➢ “Milton employs various representations of otherness” (Anderson 198), these elements outside of God’s rule are the personified characters of Chaos and Night

➢ Chaos, containing within it “embryon atoms,” and is said to be the “womb of nature” and to contain “pregnant causes”

➢ “Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height, and time and place are lost; where eldest Night and Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold eternal anarchie, amidst the noise”

Satan

Satan and his own relationship with Chaos and Night as an ally to these forces outside of God, wishes to use his power to overthrow God and his rule through his actions against Adam and Eve and his building of the Hell’s empire.

➢ The rousing cry following Satan’s speech of reclaiming Heaven shakes the world and even rouses Chaos and Night, “all the while sonorous mettal blowing Martial sounds: at which the universal host upsent a shout that tore Hell’s Concave, and beyond frightened the Reign of Chaos and old Night”

Eve

Eve and her particular relationship with God, his rule, and her relationship with Chaos and Night represent a feminized otherness that Eve at times within the narrative wishes to join via suicide.

➢ Chaos and Night is the established feminized otherness that remain outside of God and his rule. This can then been seen as an extension through Eve and her particular actions and relationship with her ruling deity

➢ Eve’s relationship with God is expressed through her male counterpart, Adam. Eve expresses disinterest in the interactions between God’s angels and herself with Adam. The incident of which shows how far Eve will go to be away from God and yet still be with her beloved Adam is when she and Adam have ate the apple and in fear of God’s wrath proposes suicide.

➢ “From what we fear for both, let us make short, let us seek death, or hee not found, supply with our own hands his office on our selves; why stand we longer shivering under feares, that shew no end but death, and have the power, of many wayes to die the shortest choosing, destruction with destruction destroy”

Conclusion

Eve and Satan sought to defy God and his rule through the possibility of Chaos and Old Night’s own alternative otherness that existed outside of God. But because Satan and Eve are God’s creation they can never take that final leap outside of his universe.