

# A Tug of War between God and Satan: The Interpretation of Adam and Eve's Dreams in John Milton's Paradise Lost

Szu-Han Wang

Faculty of Language Center, National United University, Taiwan  
Email: [szuhan@nuu.edu.tw](mailto:szuhan@nuu.edu.tw)

**Abstract**—The paper aims to explore how the opposing thrones between God and Satan spread out in dreams in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Dreams regarded as fields for Satan to induce Eve make Satan temporarily win the battle; however, God turns the tables with little effort to subjugate Satan by appearing in Adam and Eve's dreams. In Milton's elaboration of *Paradise Lost*, God the father, the incarnation of morality represents supreme power in universe. Howbeit, Satan not only embraces the image of the representative of evilness but plays the embodiment of the root of human crime. Due to the hatred out of jealousy, dissemination with malevolent rumor against God becomes Satan's measure to persuade falling angels that they should possess equal status with God instead of being inferior to God. Furthermore, Satan incarnates himself as animals to induce Eve to rebel against doctrines and orders made by God. Impressively, images of evilness and goodness both appear in Eve and Adam's dreams reflecting the tug of war between justice and injustice. Dreams symbolize the space of the universe containing positive and negative power. Disregarding the influence of biblical works and other relevant elements in accord with Milton's imagination, the issue of the opposed thrones between God and Satan plays a pivotal role in enriching the epic.

**Keywords**—Adam and Eve, Dream Interpretation, John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, The Tug of War

## I. INTRODUCTION

Adam and Eve respectively embrace different dreams possessing the appearance of God and Satan who separately bring various messages to them. As Carver expounds, "imagination causes dreams and delusions, usually in sleep" (427), Eve's desire brings her imagination resulting in dreams also caused by "the will of man who voluntarily imagines what he previously experienced, so also the same may be done by the power of a good or a bad angel, sometimes with alienation from the bodily senses, sometimes without such alienation" (425). In Satan's first plan regarding inducing Eve to eat

the apple, the power of the bad angel in dreams has successfully persuaded Eve to be sinful relating to eat the forbidden fruit. There are good and bad angels hidden in human heart. Unfortunately, good angels in Eve's unconsciousness fail in defeating the bad ones aroused and inspired by Satan.

## II. THE APPEARANCE OF SATAN IN EVE'S DREAM

Before referring to the textual analysis of how Satan tempts Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Bowers supplies an evident blueprint to illustrate how dreams with illusions work in Eve's brain and further explains how venom with evil thought is inserted in to Eve's body: The single piece of motivation that Milton uses to explain Eve's revolt is the corruption that Satan whispers in her ear as she lies asleep. Milton assigns two objectives to Satan: first, he hopes to inspire her with illusions, phantasms, and dreams. Presumably the memory of these would remain with her on awakening and, if not cast off, might come later to assume the shapes of reality. Second, he hopes to insert venom into her bloodstream, specifically in her so-called animal, or vital, spirits which, carried through the blood, were supposed to link the heart with the brain, the source of emotion with the source of thinking (267). In relation to the temptation of Satan, Summer provides a distinct description to present how Satan's vindictive act relates to the plan of human creator as he points out "Satan has caused Eve to dream in almost exact detail her future sin; he has intentionally provided the first 'temptation,' but he has also unwittingly cooperated with God's plan to give our first parents every possible anticipatory knowledge of the horror and consequences of their act" (253).

The paragraph above clearly points out Satan's trick and strategy in seducing Eve. As the creator of Eve, God will not allow Satan to constantly entice Eve. Nonintervention can never be the policy of God to deal with injustice. Interestingly, when Eve has to make a choice to believe the serpent's seduction or not, the

pivotal point influencing her is “loyalty” rather than “intellect.”

At the beginning of the great narrative poem, the author has conspicuously described the tug of war between God and Satan. Such tension has absorbed readers’ curiosity to the issue that who is the character making Mother of human beings disobedient to God and expelled from Eden. And the answer is Satan, the serpent of the hell. Unavoidably, Satan could be regarded as villain hero though he is called nothing but a betrayer. His heroic characteristic cannot be ignored if we analyze this character by discussing how he bravely confronts and overcomes any possible predicaments resulting from his tendency of vengeance and vanity.

In Book I and II of *Paradise Lost*, we obtain the context that being expelled from the heaven, Satan still displays heroic image with regard to rebellion. Falling from heaven because of arrogance and reluctance to be the follower of God, Satan never ceases to strive to go back to heaven. No matter how suffering tremendously comes to his mind, there is nothing or no one that might affect his determination to do ill. With careful reading, we may find that the authentic reason why Satan falls is not his betrayal against God but his temptation to make human beings commit crimes that brings them to the road of mortality. For gratifying egoistic purpose to destroy others, Satan cannot avoid the fate of falling into the hell. Beside, mentioning heroes with various types, the term “Satanic hero” would be better to describe Satan, whose image is always conscious pretense. With subsequent disguising as “stripling cherub, cormorant, toad, and serpent,” he deserves to be called a hero, but Satanic hero rather than a rightful hero (Steadman 255).

In book IV, it refers to Satan’s motivation to do injury to Adam and Eve. After overhearing Adam and Eve’s conversation about the forbidden fruit that will bring them the punishment, death, Satan decides to entice Eve in her dream. As the mantle of night appears, the couple retires for the night and it is the moment for Satan to implement the seductive plan—persuading Eve to eat the forbidden fruit by praising how magic the fruit is. Satan disguises himself as a toad for effortlessly approaching Eve. The contexts are revealed as follows,

So saying, on he led his radiant files, Dazzling the moon; these to the bower direct In search of whom they sought: Him there they found Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve, Assaying by his devilish art to reach The organs of her fancy, and with them forge Illusions, as he list, phantasms and dreams; Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint The animal spirits, that from pure blood arise Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise At least

distempered, discontented thoughts, Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires, Blown up with high conceits ingendering pride. (IV. 795-807)

Satan tries to arouse Eve’s distempered though and inordinate desires concealed in Satan’s mind as well. Being expelled from the heaven, Satan feels despaired and such hopelessness makes him abandon himself and totally discard dignity. If one’s dignity has been casted away, it is impossible to awaken one’s conscience. Although he conceives that God will punish him more as a result of his recycling sin, Satan still makes a revenging step in the direction of guilt, and disguising as an animal and appearing in Eve’s dream are his first stride for revenge. By lurking beside Eve’s ears and discoursing with wizardry, various evil elements filled with discontentedness are gradually inculcated in her brain. Once her thought has been polluted by vicious ideology, arrogance and desires of mankind are doomed to ripple.

Discussing Satan’s characteristic, envy and pride have filled Satan’s heart. Although both envy and pride are both Adam’s personal emotion, there is still some difference between these two sins. According to Revard, in “Satan’s Envy of the Kingship of the Son of God: A Reconsideration of *Paradise Lost*,” by exploring Satan’s instinct personality, it concludes that “Pride arises when a creature values his own self-will above the will of his creator; envy arises when one creature willfully resents the person or the accomplishments of another” (195). In such analysis, Adam’s emotion toward God is quite complicated. On the one side, his empowerment is tremendously inferior to God’s and on the other side, he has to pretend that he can successfully defeat God to supersede God’s status.

Contending with Satan’s trick appearing in Eve’s dream, God arranges the character, Adam, to stick up for justice against Satan. In Eden, Adam continually reminds his partner that they have to pray all the time to appreciate God and follow God’s prohibitory edict—never eating the fruit of the Knowledge Tree that brings not only knowledge but also mortality. The Tree of Knowledge grows beside the Life Tree and the images of death and life present a contrast for warning Adam and Eve. As the sun rises, Eve delivers her dream with fear by stating that there is an angel bringing her to the tree of knowledge and persuading her to eat the fruit for flying to the place where angels inhabit to enjoy more freedom and pleasure. In the dream, Eve cannot help but eat the attractive fruit and flies to the sky although Raphael has warned that Satan has escaped from the hell and hidden himself in the garden. Simultaneously, angels disappear and she falls down from the sky. Later, the utterance between Adam and Eve presents Adam’s frown:

My guide was gone, and I, methought, sunk down, And fell asleep; but Oh, how glad I waked To find this but a dream! Thus Eve her night Related, and thus Adam answered sad. Best image of myself, and dearer half, The trouble of thy thoughts this night in sleep Affects me equally; nor can I like This uncouth dream, of evil sprung, I fear; Yet evil whence? in thee can harbor none, Created pure. But know that in the soul. (IV. 91-100)

For consoling Eve, Adam again delivers her belief in God and explains that dreams are usually hallucinations and evilness in dreams can never take place in real life. Here, Adam's discourse reflects contrast ideas of "reason" and "delusion" in human thinking. Since Eve embraces fear concerning her prohibited behavior, it mirrors that conscience created by God still exists in human mind to impede injustice. Incidences diversely appear in human life, struggling between reason and delusion occurs to let people judge what is justice or injustice. When an individual feels asleep, the segment of "reason" does not work either. Accordingly, dreams become the stage of "delusion" and injustice and devilish imagination arises. And this is the reason why Adam encourages Eve to strengthen her mind to keep evilness appearing in dreams away from her real life and determine to follow God's step as Adam reveals,

Our knowledge or opinion; then retires Into her private cell, when nature rests. Oft in her absence mimic Fancy wakes To imitate her; but, misjoining shapes, Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams; Ill matching words and deeds long past or late. Some such resemblances, methinks, I find Of our last evening's talk, in this thy dream, But with addition strange; yet be not sad. Evil into the mind of God or man May come and go, so unreproved, and leave No spot or blame behind: Which gives me hope That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream, Waking thou never will consent to do. (V. 108-21)

Moreover, mentioning the tension of the combat between Satan's injustice and God's justice in Eve's dream, delusive and attractive atmosphere of the dreamland is used a strategy by Satan. In book V, Eve gives an elaborate description to Adam concerning what she had dreamed. The dreamland with Satan's trick successfully deceives Eve due to its glamorous atmosphere, "Now is the pleasant time, / The cool, the silent, save where silence yields / To the night-warbling bird that now awake / Tunes sweetest his love-labored song. Now reigns / Full orb'd the moon and with more

pleasing light / Shadowy sets off the face of things. (V. 38-43)

Also, while giving her voice to Adam about the seduction in the dream last night, Eve expresses a tender voice whisper to her. In the following plot, we read these words, "pleasant time" and "pleasing light."

Oh sole in whom my thoughts find all repose, My glory, my perfection, glad I see Thy face, and morn returned; for I this night (Such night till this I never passed) have dreamed, If dreamed, not, as I oft am wont, of thee, Works of day past, or morrow's next design, But of offence and trouble, which my mind Knew never till this irksome night: Methought, Close at mine ear one called me forth to walk With gentle voice; I thought it thine: It said, Why sleepest thou, Eve? now is the pleasant time, 'The cool, the silent, save where silence yields 'To the night-warbling bird, that now awake 'Tunes sweetest his love-labored song; now reigns 'Full-orb'd the moon, and with more pleasing light 'Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain, 'If none regard; Heaven wakes with all his eyes, 'Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire? (V 28-45)

Wonderful situation enveloped in delightful moonshine bring Eve disasters.

Hence, Adam becomes a victim as well. While Eve stands up and finds that the person who talks to her is not Adam. Eve has lost Adam to some extent because she was seduced by Satan mistaken for Adam. Irrationally, Eve feels that she is brought on a sudden to the "Tree Of interdicted Knowledge / Fair it seemed, Much fairer to" her than by day (V 52-53). Being tempted step by step and smelling the fragrance of Satan, the complicated image of the Knowledge Tree arouses Eve's impulse. In other words, Satan employs the excuse of the forbidden tree to euphemistically propose that Eve is suggested to have sexual relationship with him. Here, the Tree of Knowledge becomes a medium to deliver that desire is not contented. Satan talks to Eve with bold words relating to eating sweet fruits to make her agitated. Eve's excitation also motivates her to immediately tell Adam about her dream after waking up. Satan's eating forbidden fruit doesn't shock Eve, but the bold words—"Mee damp horror chilled / At such bold words vouch'd with a deed so bold" (V. 65-66). In Eve's dream, Satan has totally replaced the status of Adam. Being attracted by the evil character, Eve forgets that Adam is actually her mate at this stage. She becomes oblivious of God's discourse about Adam, "Inseparably thine. To him shalt bear / Whose image thou art, him thou shalt enjoy / Multitudes

like thyself and thence be called / Mother of human race" (IV. 472-5). However, after the dreamland with regard to Satan's temptation, the character whom constantly refers to is Satan instead of Adam. Confronting the trickster, Eve possesses nothing faithful to her husband but shares the forbidden fruit with other man. When Satan pulls the fruit apart and sends it to Eve's mouth, she enjoys the "pleasant savory smell" (V. 84) and becomes gluttonous. Eve's eating fruits reflects her improper behavior regarding being a wife—shifting her identity from Adam's mate to Satan's. Eve's dream terminates with her flying in the sky with Satan and such climax was disclosed as follows, "Forthwith up to the clouds / With him I flew and underneath beheld / The earth outstretched immense, a prospect wide / And various, wond'ring at my flight and change / To this high exaltation. Suddenly / My guide was gone and I, methought, sunk down / And fell asleep" (V. 86-93).

Satan successfully seduces Eve to eat the forbidden fruit with illusory persuasion. Like what Raphael has told Adam, psywar is the tactic employed by Satan who infuses wickedness into human thought. Not only Eve's is directly deceived but Adam is indirectly taken in when Eve describes her dream to Adam later and further drags him into a mire. Penetrating through Satan's tricks, we see "how devilish indeed had been Satan's wiles in cloaking his criminal suggestions under the guise of seeming good" (Bowers 267). It's conspicuous that the purpose of this dream reflects the falling angel's pride and dissatisfaction.

After woken by Adam, Eve proposes a question concerning her dream and in Adam's response, he mentions "evil" and "fancy"—two elements in Eve's dream about a speaking serpent. However, Adam's utterance can hardly eliminate Eve's confusion. Both of them are creatures of God, who is the merely one to master the actual state of affairs. Bowers help us realize how Adam's powerlessness is accurately interpreted in Eve's dream. As what he refers to, Adam comforts Eve with two statements that "need comment"—First, although Adam thinks this strange dream sprang from "evil," he cannot imagine where the evil has come from so he secondly assigns the dream not to evil but to the "fancy," which substitutes for "reason" in sleep. The strange addition concerning his being forced to put aside is inexplicable (268). The phenomenon above has revealed that under God's arrangement about Satan's seducing Eve in her dreams, Adam does not realize any inside story or hidden fact arranged by God.

Dreams mirror one's unconsciousness. In surface observation, we might conclude that there is no one but Satan resulting in Eve's betrayal. Nevertheless, before Eve's dream of Satan's seduction, she had yearned to eat

the forbidden fruit. That is to say her falling is not merely caused by Satan but her temperament of thirsting for pleasure. Once Eve has implicated Adam, we may ponder on the issue that Eve is innocent or not. Eve's dream can be recognized as a medium for her to express her desire in unconsciousness. The serpent repetitiously whispers in her ear and she spares no effort to resist the speaker of the evil. This behavior has presented that Eve has already been disobedient to God, who had ever sent angels to remind them never betraying God. Even never rejects the dream or the evil. Therefore, is Satan or Eve corrupting Eve/herself?

Although she is submissive to Adam ostensibly, discontented vanity and pride let her dream Satan who takes advantage of the female character's weakness to bait her by exposing, "Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire, In whose sight all things joy with rapture, Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze" (V 44-7). Through the dream, Eve gets rid of constraint and gratifies her desire by betraying her husband, whose rib creates her in God's will. In the following, Eve's female characteristic will be discussed in the aspect of her disobedience.

In Eve's narration, we realized that the distance between God and her is farer than God and Adam and it's the reason why she requires to be guided. Referring to Eve's waking up in darkness instead of brightness, it also implies that God's light of truth has not happened to her. In the meantime, she immediately finds that she is deceived and attracted by an image, an inverted reflection in water. Actually the inverted image in water is reflected from Eve's. If there is no God's order to ask her to leave, she might be deceived by the image and fascinated by the illusive image in water. Here, God, as a reminder, tells Eve that it is not Eve's image but Adam's whose rib is made to create Eve. Naturally, Eve accepts God's explanation and it also reveals the hierarchical order that God is superior to Adam and Adam is superior to Eve. The function of Eve's existence is to expound that women are not spiritually purer than Adam so Eve's distance to God is farer than Adam's. In such phenomenon, Milton apparently points out that there is no professed equality between males and females in human society. Adam and Eve's example reflects authentic relationship between men and women in Milton's society.

Although Eve is seduced by the snake and persuades Adam to eat the forbidden fruit due to her selfishness, she is not totally imperfect. Being bold in admitting her fault and successfully freeing herself from predicament both prove that human beings' ancestor/mother is not so defective in her personality. On the contrary, in the light of John Milton's description upon Eve, characteristics of intelligence and wisdom are disclosed in her dialogue with Adam. Due to braveness,

she confesses her mistake in front of Adam, who dares not directly admit his committing prohibited behavior after God's irate questioning. On account of intelligence, sincerity and modesty, Eve stands on the initiative status to make Adam aware of that he has been committed the crime as well. In Adam and Eve's interaction, it proves that human beings require companionship for making life meaningful and the responsibility to propagating species by expressing love is significant as well. Without the female partner, Adam can hardly complete in intelligence and even incomplete in social, physical and psychological development. It also means that Adam requires Eve to fulfill his nature to be a man. For instance, after Eve's bad dream, Adam plays the function of being a male partner to comfort her tears by cheering her and support her away from idea of self-destruction.

### III. THE APPEARANCE OF GOD IN TWO CREATURES' DREAMS

In the article, "The Art of Domination: An Analysis of Power in Paradise," it is elucidated that God possesses the absolute right to rule due to his superior merit and creating everything and everyone. Besides the creator of the universe there is no one possess authority even angels who can only deed with God's indication (Walum 576). The image of God permanently holds power to dominate creatures with authority and prestige. Humans are endowed with the right of free choices to commit crime or not but God simultaneously owns potency to punish people who are sinful because when people are endowed with free will to make any choice in the world, they should take the responsibility to any result that might take place. Owing to affectionate love, God usually forgives people by supplying them a second opportunity to atone for their indiscretion and mistakes. Especially, God appears in the protagonists' dreams to deliver his love.

By asserting that the characters rebelling him or endangering others will be punished to fall into the eternal darkness, God presents his severity as well. In such phenomenon, God's rigidity and goodness conclude that the freedom of choice making is not tantamount to the absolute freedom. Accordingly, freedom exists on the base of being obedient to God's tenet.

God has predicted that men's falling will happen when Satan successfully overcoming barriers to come to Eden. The bridges between the hell and man's world are built for devils, guilt and death to enter human spaces to seduce them to fall. God and angels' protection is the only defense against devils. Omnipotent God also presages that jealousy is the main element to arouse the revenge of Satan, who is determined to destroy daughters and sons of God. Accordingly, humans will fall into the snare set by Satan to trespass against God, who purposely empowers

human to proceed with free will for testing if they are loyal to God or not. In Adam's dream, God emerges to introduce a female mate for him and in the same book, God reminds him that "Dream not of other worlds, what creatures there / Live, in what state, condition, or degree" (VIII 175-6).

As an intelligent leader of human beings, God invariably arranges discerning situation to test or help or save individuals. Taking Adam's dream for example, for completing Adam's intellect by supplying him a female partner, God predicts such message in advance in the way of dream. As what Revard suggests, except God's, all intellects are restricted and the superiority of God's intellect alone would protect creatures against sin (75).

### IV. GOD'S EPIPHANY IN ADAM'S AND EVE'S DREAM

Dream could be defined as the medium for God to predict what will happen in the future. Furthermore, the power of the creator is revealed not only in dreams but out of dreams. In Eden, the place filled with God's blissful tiding, Adam is formed that his female partner will be brought to him. Subsequently, Adam sleeps and receives the image that a woman is led by the creator's voice. As expected, the mother of human race appears as Adam utters, "Such as I saw her in my dream, adorned / With what all Earth or Heaven could bestow / To make her amiable: On she came, / Led by her heavenly Maker, though unseen" (VIII 482-5).

Being contrary to Satan's murky image in dreams, the creator's image emerging in Adam's dream is bound with "divinity" which reflects overwhelming power to stem the torrent of evilness. In Adam's dream, divine images turn up more than once:

Pensive I sat me down: There gentle sleep  
First found me, and with soft oppression  
seized My droused sense, untroubled, though  
I thought I then was passing to my former  
state Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve:  
When suddenly stood at my head a dream,  
Whose inward apparition gently moved My  
fancy to believe I yet had being, And lived:  
One came, methought, of shape divine. (VIII.  
287-95)

In the following context, we also read that what has been uncovered in Adam's dream, an instrumentality of God's foretelling, is proved in Adam's life. "To pluck and eat; whereat I waked, and found / Before mine eyes all real, as the dream / Had lively shadowed: Here had new begun / My wandering, had not he, who was my guide / Up hither, from among the trees appeared, / Presence Divine. Rejoicing, but with awe" (VIII. 309-14). No matter how Adam behaves, he is always under

omnipotent God's order. That is to say "how Adam stands against potential weakness from within, how through valuing himself rightly in the hierarchical position that God has granted to him he may buttress himself against sin" (Revard 72). As an absolute ruler, God make humans free to make choices with the condition that men have to be obedient although as followers of God, Adam and Eve can hardly avoiding confronting the perfect place, Eden. As a "park" and a "pleasure ground," Eden offers sense of security and joy for Adam and Eve; however, as a result of disobedience, they can no longer dwell in (Lieb 136).

If concentrating on the sphere of the dream of battle, it is interesting that the tug of war between God and Satan only takes place in Eve's dream who both dreams of God and Satan simultaneously. Nevertheless, Adam only dream of God appearing in his dream to predict or direct. God and Satan separately represent truth and untruth and it seemingly implies that Adam embraces positive image thanks to his only dreaming of God instead of Satan. In contrast with Adam, Eve is doomed to be the arch-criminal—bringing the unfortunate to his male companion.

Before being doomed to be expelled from Eden, God dispatches Michael to comfort Adam by predicting human future and discoursing wherever human beings exist, God's blessing must be there. Although Eve does not join Michael and Satan's conversation, the creator justly delivers glad tidings to Eve in her dream to console her. She is not ignored by God as what Michael tells Adam, "go, waken Eve;/Her also I with gentle dreams have calmed/Portending good, and all her spirits composed/To meek submission: thou, at season fit/ Let her with thee partake what thou hast heard" (XII. 594-8). In the final book of *Paradise Lost*, dreams supply functions of consolation to make Eve feel ease regarding their deportation. Eve's dreamland is not Satan's territory to spread ill will anymore. It is apparent that God is the omnipotent victor in the tug of war between Satan and the creator in human being's dreams as what Eve's expression to Adam proves as follows,

Whence thou returnest, and whither wentest,  
I know; For God is also in sleep; and dreams  
advise, Which he hath sent propitious, some  
great good Presaging, since with sorrow and  
heart's distress Wearied I fell asleep: But now  
lead on; In me is no delay; with thee to go,  
Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,  
Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me Art all things  
under Heaven, all places thou, Who for my  
willful crime art banished hence. (XII. 610-9)

Eve delightedly goes downhill with Adam owing to her trust in God, who inspires her in the dream that through belief and redemption, descendents will go back to the

paradise someday. In Eve's last dream, it proves that men's creator is the victor in the war between Satan and omnipotent God in human being's dream battles. Again, Satan, possessing hatred than love, fails to retaliate in the universe made by God (Summers 252).

## V. CONCLUSION

Under God's omnipotence and commands, Adam and Eve cannot willfully dream in their own way or unscrupulously put their desire into practice. As a matter of course, people can hardly follow ones' inclination to dream in real life, like John Milton—a revolutionist who is restrained from giving full play in his talent in politics. The restoration of a dethroned monarch has depressed him and such greatest epic, *Paradise Lost*, becomes Milton's dreamland to politically voice the forbidden in real life, and to carry out his aspiration with reference to democracy and liberty to console his indignation and suffering.

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