The Poetry of the Fallen: Tragic agency, authorship, and narratives of the human in epic + feminist science fiction

by

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This BPhil thesis tells a story about stories—its central themes are origin myths and feminist reading. The genres I explore are classic epic (I begin with my readings of Vergil's Aeneid and Milton's Paradise Lost) and feminist science fiction (I address Shelley's Frankenstein, Woolf's Orlando, Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time, and Russ's The Female Man). This paper traces the emergence of a feminist poetics in the science fiction texts, characterized by partiality and possibility. I date its beginning to Shelley's Frankenstein and see its further articulation in works of contemporary feminist science fiction. However I will argue that we can read the great classic works, Vergil's Roman epic and Milton's Christian epic, with a sensitivity to partiality and possibility—and see, if in episodes and irony, this poetics in broad literary historical perspective.

Taking the Aeneid in one view, we read it as a triumphant teleological narrative of the foundations of imperial Rome culminating in Turnus's death an act of founding violence. We can read Paradise Lost in the same way, a triumphant teleological narrative with Christ as its center and redemption and damnation as the only potential outcomes offered. This paper is an attempt to recover other possibilities and other readings from these classics, by focusing on the figures of Dido, Eve, and Satan. From the classics, this paper moves into performing readings of feminist science fiction. I see Frankenstein as the beginning of this genre, and read this novel as the beginning and source of an explicit feminist poetics. Following my reading of Frankenstein, I move into discussing the work of contemporary feminist science fiction. Here, I analyze the poetics of a genre that is explicitly feminist in order to understand the feminist work of constructing new narratives and new words.

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My BPhil research originated with my reading of Donna Haraway's polemical essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" and its "effort to build an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism" (149). Haraway sets the origin myth of her cyborg in opposition to what she describes as origin stories in the Western sense:

> The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense — a 'final' irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos of the 'West's' escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space. An origin story in the 'Western', humanist sense depends on the myth of original unity, fullness, bliss and terror, represented by the phallic mother from whom all humans must separate, the task of individual development and of history, the twin potent myths inscribed most powerfully for us in psychoanalysis and Marxism. (150-1)

Following Haraway's critique of origin myths, I ventured into a project that I thought would be a comparison of classic origin myths (Aeneid, Paradise Lost and Frankenstein) and the new origin myths of the cyborg in contemporary science fiction (the authors of which Haraway identifies as 'theorists for cyborgs'(173)). I expected to find this appeal to a higher and original unity in the narratives and language of these classical origin stories. Haraway herself suggests by allusion the importance of Paradise Lost and Frankenstein:

> The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. No longer structured by the polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the *oikos*, the household. Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other. The relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination, are at issue in the cyborg world. Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos. The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust. Perhaps that is why I want to see if cyborgs can subvert the apocalypse of returning to nuclear dust in the manic compulsion to name the Enemy. (151)

In analyzing these classical origin myths, especially in the case of the epic poems, I sought and certainly found Haraway's polarity and hierarchical domination in their formation of wholes/narratives from parts/episodes. Still I was plagued by the nagging desire to rescue something of the universal classic from what seems like her wholesale dismissal of myths like Vergil's Aeneid and Milton's Paradise Lost. This paper is an attempt to accomplish something of that work. With resolute commitment, I hope to capture something of that "partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity" represented in the tragedies of Dido, Eve, and Frankenstein's monster with that same effort to find it in contemporary origin stories of cyborgs.

The Roman narrative of humanity and history, or How do we read Dido?[1]

I begin with Vergil, whose poetry T.S. Eliot found appropriate to use in order to "rehearse the characteristics" of his definition of the classic. Speaking of the necessity of maturity of mind to create a classic, Eliot remarks upon this comparative historical consciousness which will inform my overall methodology and my thinking about Vergil's great poem: "Consciousness of history cannot be fully awake, except where there is other history than the history of the poet's own people: we need this in order to see our own place in history" (122). Here, Eliot is speaking specifically of the Roman historical consciousness by comparison to the Greeks, whose minds Eliot supposed could not have been comparative. Vergil's indebtedness to Greek minds and words has been well covered, and adding to this scholarly conversation is beyond the scope of this project and my knowledge of Greek. However, Eliot's notion of Vergil's comparative historical consciousness is useful to me when applied to a reading of the Aeneid that considers the historical 'others' represented in the poem.

Looking at the poem's representation of those two tragic figures by focusing on Dido/her Carthage and alluding to Turnus/his rustic Italy, my reading of the poem seeks to bring the comprehensiveness of Vergil's epic back into the light. This comprehensiveness, another necessary characteristic of the classic which Eliot identified—the condition of representing the full range of feeling of those who speak the language of a work's composition in the case of the relative (or national) classic and in the case of the absolute or universal classic the capacity to "find its response among all classes and conditions of men" (128). Stanley Lombardo invokes the universal and comprehensive nature of Vergil's classic in the introduction to his recent translation—identifying this universality "for diverse readers in very different times" in Aeneas

[1] Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Citations are from the Mynors OCT.

as representative of the human capacity to endure suffering, "a sort of epic Everyman, one who escapes by the skin of his teeth from being dispatched on what Hegel would call 'the slaughter bench of history' and thereby comes to incarnate the capacity of human beings to endure existence on the brink of ruin—and then to begin again and to flourish" (xvi). The major narrative of the Aeneid is Rome's foundation, yet Aeneas will not succeed without suffering himself and causing suffering—this is the poetical and political crux of the Aeneid. In order to interpret the Aeneid I will attempt to untangle the central narrative element of fate and the central thematic element of suffering in the poem—but do so, not focusing on the poem's hero, but the tragical figure Dido. For me the question of the poem's comprehensiveness is not just about Aeneas's ability to endure suffering and his triumph, but also about how we feel with those characters who cannot endure in this world centered on Rome.

I hope to skirt around the edges of that conflict which is so prominent in Vergil studies, the question of the poem's relationship with Augustanism. In her provocative Vergil's Empire: Political Thought in the Aeneid Eve Adler cites and departs from this critical conflict centering around how to read this relationship of fate and suffering, or put differently epic history and tragedy, in the poem—"the most controversial question in contemporary interpretation of Vergil's Aeneid" is whether the poem is "pro-Augustan or anti-Augustan, pro-imperial or anti-imperial, pro-Roman or anti-Roman" (ix). Like Adler, I wish neither to dive into this debate, nor privilege fate over suffering, but take the historical (narrative) with the tragic (affective). Even those Aeneid scholars who differ greatly on the 'pro' vs. 'anti' question tend to agree on the centrality of these elements' dynamic interaction in the poem. Speaking of Bivocalism—that thread of Aeneid criticism which recognizes a 'voice' in the Aeneid opposed to its Augustan project, known also as 'The Harvard School'—Nicholas Horsfall credits Vergil's tragic voice, or

(as he cites Adam Parry's term) his 'private voice of regret,' saying "Now it would be mere intellectual hebetude or idle perversity to deny this 'voice's existence and no attempt will be made to question Vergil's doubts about glory, strength of feelings for victims and vanquished, repeated expressions of criticisms at the expense of heroes and victors, and the like" (193). He argues that the 'anti' reading, however, "is almost exactly as degrading a parody of an extremely complex original as the complete vindication of Aeneas in a spirit of righteous triumphalism" (194). Lombardo introduces his translation with similar stress on Vergil's feeling for those who suffer, but differs in his understanding of at least the poem's reception, if not the poem, as tending toward the 'anti' or tragic:

> …in constructing his celebration of Rome's empire, Vergil never loses sight of the huge costs of the victory he is praising…Impressed by this steady emphasis on suffering and loss, some readers of the poem feel that its representations of imperial glory tend to be overshadowed by an opposing tragic vision. (xv)

I believe this readerly recognition of the recurrence of suffering and the tragic 'voice' in the Aeneid along with its historical narrative of Roman triumph is not only accurate but fruitful too. I will attempt to combine this readerly empathy for the poem's suffering with a 'New Augustan' reading of its narrative, which Horsfall suggests is 'reading in terms of ancient, not modern values," a worthwhile pursuit (194).

The magnificently structured proem of Vergil's Aeneid (I.1-33) introduces multum in parvo. That most famous opening bit "Arma uirumque cano" indicates the structural elements of the Aeneid chiastically, his individual narrative (the representation of his Trojan past, his present journey toward Italy and life in Carthage, and his Roman future in Books I-VI) and the social narrative (war in Italy and the actions that allow for the origination of the Roman future in Books

VII-XII). Fleshing out the picture, the first seven lines of the poem demonstrate the historical context and thematic situation of this epic. The lines, "…Troiae qui primus ab oris / Italiam fato profugus Lauiniaque uenit … (I.1-2), demonstrate in their word order the movement of Aeneas from his origin in Troy to his fated Italian destination and introduce the central place of historical fate in this Roman origin myth. Already, these lines have indicated the range of the poem's narrated events and its thematics of suffering and fate—from the fall of Troy (Book II) to the end of Aeneas's struggles in battle. It is also worth noting that before the reader experiences even the first of the narrative she knows Aeneas's particular destination, Italy. She also learns that when Aeneas arrives in Italy this land will have already been inhabited and Aeneas will go to war—this is the last episode of his suffering after many until he can found his city and carry his gods into Italy, "multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem / inferretque deos Latio..." (I.5-6).

Next the poem anticipates the invocation to the Muse (I.8-11)—first by introducing the theme of human suffering in a world of divine forces, here Aeneas's suffering at the hands of cruel Iuno "ui superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram" (I.4), and second by introducing the larger historical framework and teleological purpose of this narrative (I.5-7). Hurled across lands and on the deep, Aeneas will suffer until he founds a city in Latium and carries the Trojan gods into Latium—these introductory words project events even farther into the future and trace Aeneas's legacy from his Latium, to Ascanius's Alba Longa, all the way up to the walls of lofty Rome, "altae moenia Romae" (I.6-7).

The rest of the proem renders the historical and thematic stakes of the Aeneid more vividly. Vergil invokes the Muse for aid in his investigation of cause, an intention the Aeneid

shares with Paradise Lost more than its Homeric predecessors (cf. PL I.1-6, 24-6 and VI.788)[2] — Why would the queen of the gods force Aeneas, renowned as a dutiful man, to weather calamities so great and to undergo such labors? Can divine minds harbor such wrath? The poem immediately addresses the causes of Iuno's anger, subordinating the Iliadic roots of this anger (I.23-30) to the goddess's preference for Carthage over Rome in the two empires' battle for hegemony (I.12-22)—this subordination is both explicit "Karthago… / quam Iuno fertur terris magis omnibus unam / posthabita coluisse Samo…" (I.13,5-6) and grammatical "id metuens ueterisque memor Saturnia belli / prima quod ad Troiam pro caris gesserat Argis" (I.23-4). These lines about Dido's city are significant for two reasons. They place the narrative within a human/historical framework on top of its epic/mythological causes, drawing the Roman reader to use his historical consciousness to read these millennium-old events in terms of the more recent Punic Wars. In these lines Iuno first receives the epithet Saturnia, which appears when she is acting most at odds with things driven by fate and the will of Iuppiter (cf. IV.92, VII.622)[3].

Already the proem has outlined the sides and the stakes of its events, putting Iuno (first with Dido/Carthage and later Turnus/Italy) at odds with fate/Aeneas/Iuppiter/Rome. If a reader does not have an idea of the outcome of Vergil's narrative by the end of the seven-line introduction, she certainly does by the end of the proem ending with a declaration of Aeneas's success despite the central thematic and plot element, struggle/suffering—"tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem"—so great a struggle it was to found the Roman race (I.33). It is

[2] The poet's interjection in Paradise Lost VI.788, "In Heav'nly spirits could such perverseness dwell?" is one of the most direct instances of Milton's Vergilian imitation.

[3] In Aeneid IV Iuno plans marriage between Dido and Aeneas (126-7) and an alliance between the Trojans and Tyrians, attempting to subvert the fated foundation of Rome. In Aeneid VII she opens the Latins' ceremonial war-gates herself, kindling war in previously untroubled Italy ruled by the peaceful and inert Latinus. The language of this passage immediately following, with each word beginning with a vowel and the disturbed cadence of "Ausonia", is as remarkable as the moment of the war's violent eruption: *ardet inexcita Ausonia atque immobilis ante* (623).

important to reject ways of reading like the one R.D. Williams suggests in the introductory note to his Aeneid I-VI commentary—"We are never sure, as the poem develops, whether he [Aeneas] will succeed" (155)—because history and the poem necessitate Aeneas's success, necessitate that Aeneas endures what he suffers. Further, even before the poem introduces the human agents associated with Iuno—you expect (correctly) that these humans belong to tragical Aeneid. Keeping in mind the larger picture of the poem in toto, Dido's narrative in life (I, IV) and death (VI) will be the focus of my reading—appropriate for she is a major, if not the primary, figure of human suffering in the poem. Reading with Dido, we can gain insight into the Aeneid not only in its historical context but also understand how the poem demonstrates that necessary characteristic of the absolute classic, speaking to a full range of feelings. How does the poem allow us to feel with Dido, while we keep in mind its triumphant narrative of Rome's foundation?

Dido's suffering, her 'place on the slaughter bench of history' is a historical necessity of the narrative, indeed her tragic end has already crept into the narrative of the Aeneid in the proem—these introductory lines have sown the seeds not only of Aeneas's fated foundation of the Roman race, but also of Dido and Carthage's suffering and fall with the allusion to the Roman victory in the Punic Wars (I.22). While the proem introduces her Carthage, Dido first enters the Aeneid (I.299) immediately after Iuppiter's prophetic revelation of the Fates to Venus (I.257-96), in which he declares "unrolling the scroll, I will throw light on the hidden secrets of the fates" (I.262). The primary function of this passage is to offer Venus comfort (and the reader further assurance) that despite her son's present suffering he will found the promised city and find his place in glory among the stars. Iuppiter's prophecy also offers a justification for suffering in the poem—its historical telos of Augustan peace (I.291-6). Iuppiter then commands

Mercury to make Carthage welcoming to Aeneas and his party, "lest, ignorant of fate, Dido shut up her borders" (I.299-300). Two things about Dido's introduction are noteworthy—it makes known that Dido may act against Aeneas's fate and, while the passage occurs a beat after Iuppiter's revelation of fate in the poem, Iuppiter's/Mercury's actions do nothing to make Dido otherwise than unknowing, 'fati nescia.'

The poem elevates this irony when Aeneas first spies Carthage and apostrophizes to the city—"O fortunate ones, whose walls rise already!" (I.437)—this historical irony would be readily apparent to a Roman reader with the Punic Wars near the front of his mind. Yet, from the outset Vergil renders Dido robustly and with parallels to Aeneas. As a fugitive she led an overseas voyage and founded a city—Vergil captures the magnificence of this deed in his brief formulation "dux femina facti" (I.364). We see her citadel and society rising, and her people laying the foundations of infrastructure and institutions, through Aeneas's marveling eyes and a simile about a bustling and productive hive (I.421-35). The magnificent representations of the Trojan War on the walls of Dido's temple to Iuno demonstrate that Dido has knowledge of and shares in Aeneas's history and his gods (but her allegiance is to the altar of Iuno, not Iuppiter's).

Despite her excellences, the poem deliberately creates a tragic situation for Dido—she has offered Aeneas great hospitality, rule of their kingdoms side-by-side (pariter, I.572), and Aeneas offers a gracious and laudatory speech wishing her an eternal name and honor (I.595-610). "While the rivers still flow to the sea, while the shadows still play on they valleys and mountains, while the heavens still feed the stars, honor and praise will always adhere to your name, whatever lands call me" (I.607-10). These words have their own irony, the kind of immortal fame Aeneas wishes for Dido, that is as his generous host and succor, will not be hers. Rome and Carthage are not two entities that can endure side-by-side rule and other lands do call

Aeneas—the reader begins to apprehend the tension between Dido and Aeneas's fated ends, mounting further as Dido shows signs of love after Venus/Cupid's divine intervention and her banquet conversation with Aeneas.

Aeneas's narration of the final moments of the Trojan War and his long journey from Troy to Carthage comprise Books II and III, and we learn Aeneas's history as Dido hears it. We learn of further affinities between Dido and Aeneas—most importantly their shared strength of character, the capacity to overcome suffering, and the authority to lead (rulership for Dido already, current captainship and fated rule for Aeneas). As Venus recounted Dido's receiving the fortunate warning to flee Tyre from the shade Sychaeus (I.353-9), Aeneas recounts receiving his sacred mission from the shade of Hector in a dream to carry the Trojan Penates into a new city (II.293-5). Having carried his father and son from the burning city in a resounding display of filial piety and patriotic duty, Aeneas learns more from the shade of his wife who fell behind, Creusa. Creusa first reveals Aeneas's Italian destination and fate to him—"A long exile and plowing the vast surface of the sea is your fate, yet you will come to Hesperian land…there, joyous things, a kingdom and a queen for your wife are readied for you" (II.780-1, 3-4).

The reader has long known of Aeneas's Italian fate by her position in history, the language of the proem, and the Zeus/Venus prophetic episode but the Creusa episode of Aeneas's narrative demonstrates that Aeneas is aware that his fate is directed toward Italy. We also see Dido hear of Aeneas's future and begin to understand the impossibility of side-by-side rule in Africa. Book III mainly serves the purpose of establishing that Aeneas's attempts to settle outside of Italy are consistently met with failure--the Polydorus incident in Thrace, the plague in Crete, and Helenus's prophecy add further confirmation to Creusa's shade's words/ Cassandra's prophecy of his Italian destination (III.394, VII.116) . Book III also creates a narrative of

homecoming to Italy through the Trojan father Dardanus (III.500-4) that confers historical authority to Aeneas in addition to divine authority. The episode of Book III, with Helenus and Andromache settled in their city, demonstrates that Aeneas is the lone Trojan man fit for and called to the fated rulership in Latium and foundation of Rome. The episode simultaneously sets Aeneas straight on course to crash into Dido and returns the narrative back to the first book with the calamity at sea stirred up by Iuno and Aeolus. While the narrative of Books I and IV can be (and has been) read as the stand-alone story of Aeneas and Dido's love and her tragedy, by keeping in mind the prescriptions of Books II and III this book takes on greater tragic force.

With the historical and divine causes lined up, Dido's situation reveals itself immediately upon the narrative's return to her court in Book IV. Beyond Dido's devotion past the grave to Sychaeus, Books II and III reveal that Aeneas's fate stands opposed to her feeling. Inflamed by Aeneas's virtues and life's tale (as well as her sister Anna's words and the machinations of Iuno/Venus/Cupid), Dido is in love. Hearing Aeneas's narrative along with Dido, we empathize with her—a feeling that our position of historical irony intensifies and complicates. The difficulty of her situation rises to desperate and impossible levels when Iuppiter Omnipotens (IV.220) sends Mercury to shake Aeneas out of his Carthaginian repose (IV.219-78) after Aeneas and Dido's night in a cave orchestrated by Iuno and Venus—Dido took this to be a marriage (IV.172). Aeneas's Roman fate stands in direct opposition to her desires—the reader knows well how history motivates Iuppiter's blustering message to Aeneas and Aeneas's awestruck obedience. His language is powerful, appealing to both Aeneas's desire and duty to propagate the Roman race from the Trojan's high birth (IV.230-1) and the (notably, though just through allusion, Augustan) political end to send the whole world under the rule of law (IV.231). The poetry of this sentence reinforces Iuppiter's message—beginning with nascent empire and

raging war, the sentence climaxes with Aeneas's future *Italiam regeret* and the future Roman race (IV.231) and expands out into the whole word order. The subjunctive mood of *regeret* demonstrates the uncertainty in this moment of Aeneas's fate based upon his present actions—Iuppiter accuses him of acting against the fate his mother worked for in saving him from battle twice at Troy (IV.228-9), the same fate Iuppiter previously prophesied in the future indicative "bellum ingens geret Italia populosque ferocis / contundet moresque uiris et moenia ponet, / tertia dum Latio regnantem uiderit aestas / ternaque transierint Rutulis hiberna subactis" (I.263-6) He then berates Aeneas—if he is moved neither by the glory of such great events (IV.232) nor his own honor (IV.233), does he begrudge Ascanius the Roman citadels? (IV.234-7). In the course of Iuppiter's speech Dido is sent to the 'slaughter bench of history'—she is an enemy of the future. The remarkable hiatus of Iuppiter's pejorative question between the words hope and hostile, "…at qua *spe inimica* in gente moratur" (IV.235) –"In what hope does he dally among this hostile race, not looking to the Ausonian race or the Lavinian fields?" (IV.235-6)—is only outdone by the final resounding subjunctive command—"Let him sail! This is paramount, let this be our message" (IV.237). Iuppiter reads Carthage's and Rome's future enmity back onto Dido and her city (inimica, IV.235), though Dido has done nothing hostile to Aeneas—quite the opposite in fact.

After a moment of shock and awe, dutiful Aeneas resolves to pursue fate rather than feeling and begins to consider his exit strategy (IV.279-95). Foreknowing Aeneas's plans, Dido is driven into the first stage of her tragic downfall. Driven out of doors in a rage compared to a Bacchic frenzy, the action of Dido's tragedy begins. The narrative of Book IV pushes Dido farther and farther into the margins of history and humane treatment. We get the first inkling of this in the poet's description of Dido's state of mind after her night with Aeneas in the cave—she

invokes marriage, she cloaks her sense of shame in this name (IV.172). We see it even more clearly in Aeneas's calculatedly cold and final denial of Dido's accusations, and more importantly his denial of Dido's last heart-wrenching plea for a 'parvulus Aeneas' for her comfort (IV.327-30). While the substance of Aeneas's reply is true (their love was not marriage, he had no intent to leave in secret, and fate necessitates his departure), Aeneas does not speak in a style true to his feeling. The poet introduces his words by drawing attention to Aeneas's lack of authenticity to his feelings—he fixed his gaze, unmoving, upon the admonitions of Jove / and deep in his heart, resolute, he repressed love (IV.331-2). The language brings further focus to Aeneas's denial of feeling through the use of rhyming line endings (…immota tenebat /…sub corde premebat), rare in the poem. Dido, driven into terrible dreams of wandering alone (sola sibi, incomitata IV.467) in the desert and eventually into unsleeping disquiet while the world sleeps (IV.522-533), makes the choice that finalizes her tragedy. She pretends preparation for a magical rite that will restore or remove her love for Aeneas, but it is truly a preparation for her suicide. The sublime image she uses to describe the pretended priestess's power—stopping the rivers, blotting out the stars, moving the earth, and setting trees walking (IV.489-91)—is not indeed a description of actual magical power. Instead, taken with Aeneas's tribute to Dido (I.607-10), it is in a way a description of the historical and legendary consequences of Dido's suicide—she moves from a position of honor and praise, to historical opposition projected into the future (especially with Hannibal in IV.622-9) and tragic pathos.

The final lines representing Dido's death are especially striking because they show that not only was Dido's way outside of Roman fate (even though the Carthaginian/Roman enmity and the figure of Hannibal emerge from her IV.622-9 curse), but her death was not ordained by fate. Iuno sends Iris down to relieve Dido from suffering and send her to death, "since she was

dying neither by fate nor a death she desired, but wretched and before her day, inflamed with sudden fury" (I.696-7). My reading of Dido's suicide as willed freely does not differ from major lines of commentary, but I believe its significance has been underplayed. This freely willed suicide of a woman with a strong capacity for love and a robust sense of dignity adds much more to the Aeneid's narrative than is necessitated by the history of Carthage and Rome's enmity. While it could be argued that the Aeneid allows for an interpretation that places Dido's tragedy within a hierarchy dominated by Rome, this last episode in Dido's narrative enacts empathy for Dido and demonstrates her full historical agency—in doing so, it invites the reader to feel with Dido at the same time that it invites the reader to conjure up an image of the world where events beyond Roman fate are possible.

In Dido's choice to die as a result of her suffering we apprehend something of the stakes of the felicitous Roman imperial project. Political rule and love between equals are some of the these stakes—certainly a loss for Aeneas (thinking of his suppression of feeling in his justification to Dido, and the lack of any real fleshing out of Lavinia's character) as well as Dido. We learn of its other stakes like the lives of virtuous youths (with the deaths of Pallas and Lausus in Book X) and the violence done against those living on the land which empire seeks to conquer (Books VII-XII, especially Amata driven out of the city in Bacchic revelry VII and to suicide XII) in the Iliadic half. The sublime moment in Book VI, imitating the underworld scene in Odyssey XI, renders grandly the depths of Dido's feeling and suffering when her shade turns away from Aeneas without a word in the underworld— "She holding her eyes fixed away from him, her countenance no more moved by the appeal he had begun than tough flint or marble can be moved. At last she tore herself away, and as his enemy, fled to the shadowy forest" (VI.469-73). Dido's final moment allows readers to turn away from the narrative of Roman fate, history,

and glory (if only briefly or partially) and to comprehend its darkness made visible in her suffering.

The Christian narrative of humanity and history, or How do we read with Eve?

Beginning in Vergilian form, the seeds of Eve's disobedience and of humanity's woe are sown in Paradise Lost's first lines—the poem begins with the fallen-ness and suffering that are so essential to its definition of the human. The poem's account of human history is a teleological Christian account, presented in brief:

> 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
> Sing Heav'nly Muse… (I. 1-6)

Milton's subject matter is divine Providence and cause, which he seeks to justify through a narrative account of human history beginning causally with the Fall. Man's presence is prominent in these opening lines as they run the course of human history from the Fall (first disobedience) to the apocalypse at the end of the Christian redemptive narrative (when Christ will restores us and regain the blissful seat). These introductory lines end in bliss and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, but their language already speaks of fallen-ness and suffering—the thick language of "disobedience," "forbidden," "mortal," "death," "woe," "loss" weigh heavy against the positive final turn. Taking death and suffering to be a given of reality, the apologetic poem seeks to justify our woeful condition within omnibenevolent divine unity—"That to the heighth of this great argument / I may assert Eternal Providence / And justify the ways of God to

men" (I.24-6). As such, the relationship between the human (in time, historical), the divine and the demonic (spiritual, out of time, mythic/theological) forms the shape of Paradise Lost.

Providence orders the poem and its order is hierarchical, placing its human narrative within a spiritual whole. Adam learns from Raphael of the unification of all things within the divine:

> O Adam! one Almighty is, from whom
> All things proceed and up to Him return
> If not depraved from good, created all
> Such to perfection, one first matter all
> Endued with various forms, various degrees
> Of substance and in things that live of life,
> But more refined, more spiritual and pure
> As nearer to him placed or nearer tending,
> Each in their several active spheres assigned
> Till body up to spirit work in bounds
> Proportioned to each kind… (V. 469-79)

Raphael here posits that corporeal things are contained within the greater realm of the spirit. All things have been issued from the divine and all things 'not depraved' are on their way back to unity with God. The trajectory of history runs towards (re)unification with the divine, all things having been assigned a place in the 'active' sphere of human history 'till body up to spirit work in bounds.' Indeed, in order to establish an understanding of Paradise Lost we must look not only at the poem's account of humankind's history but also read this within its representation of

divine events, a 'history' of the spirit—this will reveal how those opposite forces of suffering and salvation create the human in this poem.

The 'history' of the spirit is hardly a history, in that the spiritual transcends (is outside of) the corporeal and the temporal. Yet, the movement of the spiritual contains and determines the trajectory of human history. In order to interpret these two temporalities together, we must look at the structure of the poem's narration of angelic treachery and human disobedience in both the corporeal world, Eden, and the spiritual realms of Heaven and Hell. Satan and Eve are the major actors in the narrative and are the dual focal points of this analysis.

The whole of the genealogy of the spirit in Paradise Lost, all creation both divine and demonic, exists beyond the time of its narration. Satan, the Arch-Enemy, receives first introduction in the narrative and the mother of mankind (I.36) receives her introduction with him. Satan poses the most significant problem for Milton's Christian unity—mutiny in the spirit realm, evil at the side of the Most High. The poem introduces him as spatially removed from God as is conceivable, a spirit Titan and divine warrior, in epic description heightened to the sublime. Satan and his cohort of disgraced angels find themselves in 'bottomless perdition (I.47),' having just now finished their descent of

> 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… (I. 50-3)

This opening scene of the poem renders a paradise already lost, Satan and his cohort's loss of Heaven, spiritual Paradise. Separated from the divine by vast space, these fiends are least spiritual and pure—immortal spirits locked away from God to be punished eternally. Sin and

Death, already born of Satan, have been cast into this realm as well. The descent from spiritual paradise is already a forgone conclusion of the narrative, necessary to explore Eve's temptation and Adam and Eve's loss of paradise while still maintaining divine unity within the poem for the sake of the argument.

Milton makes a similar move in his representation of Adam and Eve. The first word of them beyond the proem occurs in Satan's reportage of "that prophecy or tradition in Heaven concerning another world" (Book II Argument). The narrator reflects upon Beëlzebub's proposal, first devised by Satan—"…our joy upraise / In His disturbance wben His darling sons / Hurled headlong to partake with us shall curse / Their frail originals and faded bliss— / Faded so soon!" (II.372-6)—to redeem their fall by creating the fall of humanity.

> …For whence
> But from the author of all ill could spring
> So deep a malice to confound the race
> Of mankind in one root and Earth with Hell
> To mingle and involve, done all to spite
> The great Creator? But their spite still serves
> His glory to augment… (II. 380-6)

In some sense Satan has the power to author even within the unity of the great Creator—he is the author of the fall and so the causal force beginning human history.

However, the first narrative representation of the material world is focused through God and Christ's perspective, introducing Eden and "Our two first parents," "reaping immortal fruits of joy and love" (III. 65, 7). Adam and Eve's story also begins in medias res. Their genesis is only recounted later in Adam's discourse with Raphael. The Father foretells the course of human

history to the Son. Humanity's fall is necessary for the poem's justification of Providence—Eve and Adam too are authors to themselves.

> …If I foreknew
> Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault
> Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.
> So without least impúlse or shadow of fate
> Or aught by me immutably foreseen
> They trespass, authors to themselves in all /…/
> Self-tempted, self-depraved. Man falls deceived
> By th' other first: Man therefore shall find grace,
> The other none… (III. 117-122, 130-2)

Now, together with these prescribed beginnings to their temporalities, the Father reveals the telos of man, woman and Satan. Satan's damnation is eternal, while humankind will be offered spiritual redemption through Christ, an opportunity for (re)unification with the divine.

Satan reaches this telos in narrative time—made a corporeal creature in Hell eternally tantalized by phantom fruit.

> This, more delusive, not the touch but taste
> Deceived. They, fondly thinking to allay
> Their appetite with gust, instead of fruit
> Chewed bitter ashes… (X. 563-6)

God also foretells that the Son will ultimately eradicate all spiritual evil, vanquishing Sin and Death and restoring unity between Heaven and Earth. Michael gives Adam a vision of the telos of human history while Eve sleeps, but this teleology is not completed in the narrative. Instead,

the poem leaves Adam and Eve walking through Eden, ejected from Paradise, beginning their venture at making human history while awaiting promised redemption:

> They, looking back, all th' eastern side beheld
> Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
> Waved over by that flaming brand. The gate
> With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.
> Some natural tears they dropped but wiped them soon.
> The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.
> They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow
> Through Eden took their solitary way. (XII. 641-9)

This passage offers a figure of hope—lovers hand in hand looking to eastern flames, like the rising sun, free to choose as they please in this new history opening out before them. Yet, it also lends itself to a darker interpretation—looking backwards towards Paradise, the eastern sky is not illumined by the rising sun but by flaming swords blocking return to Paradise. Turning toward the west, gloom overcomes Adam and Eve—they now must begin their march toward the west, traversing the path that just might eventually lead them back to Him. Our parents are left the consolation of Milton's "paradise within" and Christian love (caritas):

> …Hope no higher, though all the stars
> Thou knew'st by name and all th' ethereal powers,
> All secrets of the deep, all nature's works
> Or works of God in Heav'n, air, earth, or sea,
> And all the riches of this world enjoy'dst

And all the rule, one empire. Only add

Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,

Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,

By name to come called charity, the soul

Of all the rest. Then wilt thou not be loath

To leave this Paradise but shalt possess

A paradise within thee, happier far. (XII.576-87)

The redemptive narrative of history through Christ, which Michael reveals to Adam, and acceptance of Milton's providential argument form this paradise within.

Looking at the arc of these narratives it is apparent that they share a trajectory —they also have mutual cause. Satan and Eve are the agents of the dual narrative—made aware of themselves as Others by their inequality and relationality to God and Adam. They must transgress if they wish to become autopoetic subjects within divine unity. Satan experiences this dilemma as a spirit in Heaven. Seeing himself subordinated to the monarchy of the Lord, Satan covets his sovereignty over the corporeal and divine realms—His position as Creator. Because of this, he gives birth to all evil. Sin springs from his head full-formed and he fathers Death with her. Unable to effect victory in the battle in Heaven and banished thereupon, Satan finds solace in his new dominion of Hell with his demonic army and progeny —for he believes he can now possess this new realm as 'Sov'reign' (I. 246). He speaks reverently of his new dominion:

…Farewell happy fields

Where joy forever dwells! Hail horrors, hail

Infernal World! And thou, profoundest Hell,

Receive thy new possessor, one who brings

A mind not to be changed by place or time!

The mind is its own place and in itself

Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven. (I. 249-55)

Satan cannot truly create anything in the spiritual realm. Pandemonium is an illusion. Sin and Death are fated to be vanquished by Christ. He can, however, contend with God's design on the corporeal realm through his temptation of Eve. They affect change in the material world by offending against God's design, causing the loss of the Garden—an act of decreation. This decreative act brings Sin, Death, human history and Christ into the world—only creation within a larger totality, and only creation by destruction.

Eve's subjection has double valence—she is also second to Adam, the corporeal sovereign of her realm. 'A Voice' admonishes Eve, after she has interacted with her own reflection with pleasure just after her birth:

…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. (IV. 471-5)

In this poem, the voice of God himself defines Eve's human being through her reproductive capacity. Eve is part of the larger unities of Adam, God, and salvation history, while she desires the ability to make herself. Satan tempts Eve to disobey by this desire for autopoetic agency—she desires to will her own existence within corporeal reality. Like Satan, she is subordinate to the divine sovereign of everything. Eve praises the creative power of the forbidden fruit—new knowledge and the ability to articulate it.

…best of fruits,

Though kept from Man, and worthy to be admired,

whose taste too long forborne at first assay

Gave elocution to the mute and taught

The tongue not made for speech to speak thy praise. (IX. 745-9)

Yet by disobeying God and eating of the Tree, Eve "Brought death into the world and all our woe" (I.3), ending her unity with God in Paradise, receiving the burden of generation and becoming the mother of the species. While, in fact, Eve's disobedience is what creates the "paradise within" by denying humanity Paradise, this subjectivity through new knowledge can resemble Hell more than Paradise. Even before the historical introduction of suffering into the world (by Sin and Death) with Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden, Eve is in despair and contemplates suicide: "Then, both ourselves and seed at once to free / From what we fear for both, let us make short, / Let us seek Death, or, he not found, supply / With our own hands his office on ourselves." (X.999-1002). Her situation is tragic like Dido's but her way is more complicated. She is compelled to mother humanity and cannot therefore take the same way as the Aeneid's tragic queen.

In her creation of the loss of Paradise, Eve becomes the mother of the historical human and a later daughter of hers will give birth to Christ, the subject of salvation history. Christ is the only reason she can endure. Adam reminds her of "Part of our sentence, that thy Seed shall bruise / The serpent's head..." (X.1031-2), drawing her away from her anti-reproductive and suicidal thoughts (X.973-1006). The narrative closes with Adam and Eve at the start of their journey as historical humans, progressing back to God by passing time in a world of suffering and death until Christ's redemption. Having fallen from unity with the divine by asserting the

ability to do otherwise—disobeying God by their divinely-given freedom of will—the pair enters historical-material reality, Eden's country beyond the borders of Paradise. Ripped from oneness with the divine, their way is 'solitary.' Paradise Lost offers several notions of collectivity: spiritual unity with all things in and under God outside of temporal and corporeal existence, a life of reverence and obedience with God and angels in the Garden, or a man and a woman hand in hand in history. Companionate marriage is the model of the relationship from human to human as they work in bounds toward the teleological end of their history, redemption and unification with the Lord—back to the beginning.

Now, the couple may begin the progress of history, reproductive work—the reunification with God through Eve's generation of God incarnate as man. This mythic history begins with Satan and ends with Christ, bookended by unity with the divine outside of historical and narrative time. Generation, then, is the material of human history. Eve's curse resonates with Milton's horrific rendering of fecund Sin:

> These yelling monsters that with ceaseless cry
> Surround me as thou saw'st, hourly conceived
> And hourly born with sorrow infinite
> To me. For when they list, into the womb
> That bred them they return and howl and gnaw
> My bowels, their repast, then bursting forth
> Afresh with conscious terrors vex me round
> That rest or intermission none I find. (II. 795-802)

Like Sin's 'yelling monsters' born from and immediately returning to the womb, Eve's generation is not truly creative. It is her necessary burden to resist Death in the world, awaiting

Christ's advent. In the mythic framework of Paradise Lost the meaning of the material world exists only relationally to the teleology of loss of and return to Paradise. Human history will end in Christ's second coming, when He will dissolve the material world, end human history and return the faithful to the Creator's womb:

> When this world's dissolution shall be ripe
> With glory and pow'r to judge both quick and dead:
> To judge th' unfaithful dead but to reward
> His faithful and receive them into bliss,
> Whether in Heav'n or Earth, for then the Earth
> Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
> Than this of Eden, and far happier days. (XII. 459-65)

All creative acts in the poem's narrative are accomplished either completely without mothers or by incestuous coupling. While Satan and Eve are the agents of their own falls, their freedom is Christian negative freedom—an ultimately unsuccessful resistant agency within the ineluctable teleology of divine unity. The poem endows God, Christ, and Adam with prophetic power to envision this myth about history. All that is left to Eve beyond the generation of Christian history is unfaith, damnation and the night world of dream—like Satan's phantom realm in the deep.

Virginia Woolf metaphorizes the effect of the myth—Paradise Lost suggests a 'large and imposing figure of a gentleman' for her 'perpetual adoration' rather than a view of the 'open sky.' In her closing words of A Room of One's Own she envisions the moment of the deposition of this gentleman, 'Milton's bogey:'

> my belief is that if we live another century or so—I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals—and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton's bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. (114)

Woolf renders Milton's bogey ambiguously, a gentleman and a terrible spirit —not quite Adam, Satan or God. Instead the bogey is the embodiment of the sacred power of Milton's poetry—the taboos and sanctions for new myths and ties on the tongues of later writers. In The Madwoman in the Attic Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar expand Woolf's analysis, defining the effect of Milton's myth on 19th Century women writers:

> The story that Milton, 'the first of the masculinists,' most notably tells to women is of course the story of woman's secondness, her otherness, and how that otherness leads inexorably to her demonic anger, her sin, her fall, and her exclusion from that garden of the gods which is also, for her, the garden of poetry. (191)

Like the voice that taught Eve of her secondness in the Garden, Milton's voice instructs women of the vanity of their creation. Neither history nor poetry is open to them. Women have no capability to craft the world—that ability is reserved for God and his men, Adam, Christ and the

apologetic poet. Reading Paradise Lost like these feminist critics, we are invited to turn away from Milton's bogey, telling women of their necessary secondness, in the same way we turned away from Aeneas with Dido. We are invited to think of new narratives that will open up new possibilities for the paradise within.

Milton's narrative of humanity and history, or How do we read Frankenstein's monster?

Human history and poetry (and the paradise within) are the grounds of contestation in Frankenstein. Certainly Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley shared her mother's contrary intelligence, studying her works obsessively. Mary Wollstonecraft—feminist philosopher and mother of Mary Shelley, who died by her birth— wrote of Milton in her 1792 A Vindication of the Rights of Woman:

> Similar feelings [to what we feel when children are playing or animals sporting] has Milton's pleasing picture of paradisiacal happiness ever raised in my mind, yet, instead of envying the lovely pair, I have, with conscious dignity, or Satanic pride, turned to hell for sublimer objects. In the same style, when viewing some noble monument of human art, I have traced the emanation of the Deity in the order I admired, till, descending from that giddy height, I have caught myself contemplating the grandest of all human sights, for fancy quickly placed, in some solitary recess, an outcast of fortune, rising superior to passion and discontent. (II. Note 2)

Here, Wollstonecraft confesses her romantic (mis)reading of Milton. Feeling that the lovers' condition in Milton's Paradise—with its emanation of the Deity—offends her sense of her place within humanity, she identifies with the demonic. She contemplates Milton's rendering of the sublime epic warrior Satan, rising to blaspheme in passion and discontent—his pride elevating him to claim divine power to make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven. Wollstonecraft is of a

similar mind to Satan, and turns her mind to the sublimer objects of the phantom world. She takes pride in Eve's dominion in the poetic realm of Night, and claims its creative power.

In Frankenstein, Mary Shelley turns out these 'sublimer objects' with her pen. Like her mother, Shelley was a heretical reader of Paradise Lost, and investigating her work as a (mis)reading of the poem will shed light on how the novel contests Milton's history and definition of the human through its poetry. Gilbert and Gubar make the following argument in their chapter on this novel:

> Following the rise of Romanticism with its simultaneous canonization of Milton and Satan, women writers have been undeniably Milton's daughters… [They have had] on the one hand the option of apparently docile submission to male myths, of being 'proud to minister to such a father,' and on the other hand the option of secret study aimed toward the achievement of equality…these alternative patterns describe the main critical responses nineteenth- and twentieth- century women writers have made specifically to their readings, or misreadings, of Paradise Lost. We shall argue here that the first alternative is the one Mary Shelley chooses in Frankenstein: to take the male culture myth of Paradise Lost at its full value—on its own terms, including all the analogies and parallels it implies—*and rewrite it so as to clarify its meaning*. (220)

Like Satan, Shelley blasphemes. An aborted foundation myth, the poetry of Frankenstein is the poetry of horror, a revision of Milton that clarifies the violent implications of this unitary masculinist myth.

Beginning in the novel's frame narrative of Robert Walton's epistles written from St. Petersburg and Archangel, the mood is heightened with the cold northern 'wind of promise'

inspiring Walton northwards with 'fervent and vivid' daydreams (1). The explorer's expectations for this new land are nothing short of untold beauty, wonder and knowledge.

> There snow and frost are banished; and, sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. Its productions and features may be without example…What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle and may regulate a thousand celestial observations that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent forever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited. (1)

Indeed Walton's letter is prescient, but the features of this untold country are not of eternal light but of darkness. Walton runs across the half-dead Frankenstein and that other traveler who "seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European" in this sublime setting (9). Frankenstein is physically destroyed and in despair, the only thing that enlivens him again is the news that the monster may yet be alive and he might yet revenge himself.

By introducing Frankenstein and his monster in this epistolary frame narrative after the whole of the action of Frankenstein's narrative has passed, Frankenstein affords its reader forewarning of both characters' horrific and tragic fates. The frame narrative activates the expectation for the reader of violent destruction, death, and horror. The epistles leave Walton in the same state of mind, anticipating Frankenstein's narrative and resolving to record it. Thus begins the narrative of Frankenstein's creation, the occurrence that activates all the novel's horror. This is the novel's first bildungsroman, representing his childhood and education in the classics of science—"Natural philosophy is the genius that has regulated my fate" (24). He completes his education at university, where he gains the scientific knowledge that leads him to

the secret of life—the ability to create a human. He muses on his discovery's potential: "what glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!" (27). The monster is born of this monomaniacal obsession with scientific progress, male creation—"treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation" (33). His grotesque appearance is the result of Frankenstein's hasty imprecision and obsession with magnifying human power. The student seeks the total illumination of the workings of nature, a unified knowledge of reality, and by this impulse he creates monstrous but recognizably human life. Like the Creator of Paradise Lost, Frankenstein can foresee his creation's depravity from the outset of his narrative—he is telling the story after the monster's murder of Elizabeth, his final horror, and is reproducing his own horror in the narrative through foreshadowing.

The bildungsroman-style narrative ends with his creative act, represented with language of grotesque sexual violence. Frankenstein reacts to his creation as a man, not as a God whose actions are self-justified—he experiences momentary orgasmic ecstasy, followed by overwhelming horror:

> It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of a creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

> …Beautiful! Great God! ...The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. (42)

Agitating life out of non-life by his scientific investigation of the workings of the natural world, Frankenstein authors in his monster the circumstances for his own eventual destruction. As was true of Eve created from Adam's divine rib, union of the material (an amalgam of cadaver parts agitated by the instruments of life) and the mythic (scientific knowledge of the causes of life and death) creates this monster in the womb of the laboratory. Knowledge is the cause of the monster's generation—and in this generation Frankenstein's and his monster's tragic fate. Reproducing divine creative power in deformity, Frankenstein has brought forth something monstrous from the beautiful unity of the natural world. This monster is of human construction and his fate will be the same as his creator's own—self-destruction through knowledge of one's own secondness—Frankenstein's to nature/God and his monster to man/myth.

Frankenstein descends into illness and mental anguish, only returning home after he learns of his brother's murder. Following Justine's execution for the murder, he journeys into the mountains in despair. Ascending Mount Blanc, "with something like joy" he exclaims "Wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life" (80). Immediately, joy turns to horror as he spots his creation bounding up the mountain with superhuman speed—like Satan mounting Paradise—and a 'mist' comes over the creator's eyes. He addresses his

creation: "Devil do you dare approach me? And do you not fear the fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your miserable head? Begone, vile insect!" (81). The monster recognizes that wretchedness has made him a demon but he exhorts his creator to claim him as his Adam: "Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous." Frankenstein replies: "Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall." (81-2).

This 'Adam' has not been issued from God, but from man's progressive, modern and scientific creative force. Like Eve, he is defined by his secondness—but this Other does not even receive a name. He is a monster, whose grotesquerie excludes him from human collectivity. Yet issued from a human medicine and myth, Frankenstein's monster finds meaning from and thus searches for solidarity with humankind. His narrative is the novel's second bildungsroman, recounting the monster's development from his creation, through his education in myth and history as he educates himself in an attempt to join the family of cottagers he admires. As it was for Eve in Paradise Lost, the monster's consciousness of himself as other than man causes his fall. However, he finds not joy and love in his reflection but the makings of horror—fear and disgust:

> I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions; but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected back in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled

> with the bitterest sensation of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity. (94)

Not only the monster's grotesque physical form is begotten of man, the monster acquires language and is nourished by myth, reading among other things Paradise Lost and the diary of Frankenstein documenting the horrific mode of the monster's own birth. In myth the monster finds only confirmation of his depravity. He should be human, but he cannot be: "Increase of knowledge only discovered to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was" (111). He discovers that he exists beyond the myths of Christian and natural history, and thus recognizes himself in Satan but knows not what fault of his own has caused his fall. Frankenstein's impulse to create superhuman life made his form so large and grotesque. The monster's exclusion from myths of history and human collectivity is hardly his fault. His fall was preordained by natural unity and is inextricably tied to Frankenstein's own destruction—happening to run across William, his creator's little brother, he smothers him trying to silence his screams.

While a product of human scientific inquiry, the monster violates the scientific understanding of nature and the romantic aesthetic of natural beauty. A beautiful, explicable and orderly unity, the natural world affords such a grotesque and horrifically created creature no opportunity of belonging. Nevertheless, the monster, educated in this collective imaginary and the myth of Christian salvation history, conceptualizes the hope for his redemption within these frameworks. He asks Frankenstein to make him happy as God made Adam happy in Paradise, to create a companion for him—a monster of the second sex:

> This passion is detrimental to me, for you do not reflect that *you* are the cause of its excess…It is true that we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be happy, but they

> will be harmless and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! My creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one benefit! Let me see that I excite the sympathy of some existing thing; do not deny me my request! (125)

Frankenstein is moved by the monster's story and agrees to fulfill his entreaty for redemption. But fearful of creating this monstrous Eve in light of the additional violence and destruction she might inflict on humans, especially if this monstrous couple were to generate a race of monsters, he aborts his creation. With this action, the monster's hope for salvation dies. This action also determines Frankenstein's tragic fate—when he attains knowledge of the abortion of his Eve, the monster curses his creator:

> Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; obey! ... I may die, but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery. Beware, for I am fearless and therefore powerful. I will watch with the wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with its venom. Man, you shall repent of the injuries you inflict…I shall be with you on your wedding-night. (147)

The monster's revenge is sharp—fulfilling his promise, he eradicates the last source of joy from Frankenstein's life. The monster's power, like the power of Milton's Satan and Eve, is decreative. The monster laments the impotence of his violence: "For while I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires" (197). By killing Elizabeth, he has snuffed out Frankenstein's hope for happiness in the world. Frankenstein has not only lost his beloved, his 'more than sister,' but Elizabeth's death also carries symbolic resonance. Elizabeth's pursuit of the "creation of poets" existed in harmonic companionship with Frankenstein's scientific exploration of cause (22). This final horror rends the harmony of their twin myths—the myth of

natural unity and scientific progress that motivated Frankenstein to creation and the myth of salvation history and companionate marriage that inspired his monster to destruction—and terminates their trajectory in horror and tragedy.

The teleology of Frankenstein is nihilism. There will be no salvation for the monster—denied humanity and his Eve, even the vague hope of generational progress and salvation through one's descendents is unavailable. The frame narrative concludes with the monster's final lament and promise of suicide:

> "He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish… The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell."…He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance. (197-8)

His fate is the total destruction of his body and his spirit, he will return to the earth and the perpetual night of non-being and triumph in his death. Lost in darkness and distance to Walton's perception, the monster believes that his story will be lost to humanity as well—all will be destroyed. Yet Frankenstein speaks the monster's story with his own first person narration at its core. Shelley gives him and his creator voice through their sole surviving witness, Walton, who has previous experience as a poet, of which he writes to his sister: "I also became a poet and for one year lived in a paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated. You are well acquainted with my failure and how heavily I bore the disappointment" (2). Walton's second foray into poetry, the main narrative of Frankenstein, is no such failure. Frankenstein is Walton's muse and he writes with an overwhelming passion to record his story—"as I commence my task, his full-

toned voice swells in my ears" (15). His success is Shelley's success. The novel contains a preface to the novel of dubious authorship—in it one of the Shelleys explains Wollstonecraft Shelley's poetic process in Frankenstein:

> The event on which this fiction is founded has been supposed, by Dr. Darwin and some of the physiological writers of Germany, as not of impossible occurrence. I shall not be supposed of according the remotest degree of serious faith to such an imagination; yet, in assuming it as the basis of a work of fancy, I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors… however impossible as a physical fact, affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield. I have thus endeavored to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations. The Iliad, the tragic poetry of Greece, Shakespeare in the Tempest and Midsummer Night's Dream, and most especially Milton in Paradise Lost conform to this rule. (xxvii)

Rooted in biological knowledge and speculation of the time, Shelley's words represent a possible reality that could have been actual. Yet, even if the occurrences of her plot are impossible in fact, the novel represents a truth about human nature. Desiring to belong with his creator—with human kind—the monster amalgamates Milton's Satan and Eve. Defined by his otherness in relation to the natural world and society's mythic collective imaginary, Frankenstein's monster's narrative successfully renders the horror of what is left to the Other within this justification of human history's place within divine unity. While this Romantic novel does not linger over the nuances of social reality, the horror of Frankenstein clarifies the darker meaning of Milton's poem for the human collectivity.

Shelley represents the logical conclusion of the agency of resistance and decreative acts of Milton's Satan and Eve—the death of innocents, an unreachable desire to be reunited with the creator, and the failed model of collectivity that is companionate marriage or the biological family. The novel aborts the destructive potential of the monster's species with the monstrous Eve and the monster expects his story to die with him, yet his narrative is articulated by the creative act of a woman. Unable to envision himself or his kind within a new model of collectivity, the monster disappears into the darkness where he most certainly will not find a way to return to the Garden but where he may not find trees for his funeral pyre on the arctic ice-sheets either. The monster not only exists outside of salvation history, but his unnatural form also excludes him from Milton's human history—the generational history of births and deaths. Suicide is his last option for a triumphant end, a last imposition of individual destructive power over reality. Certainly he has destroyed Frankenstein and all he held dear, and the narrative leaves the monster in despair—but this last destruction is not represented but only foreshadowed by the narrative. The final horror of Frankenstein is that it leaves the monster wandering the dark world—Shelley does not represent the monster's death. Instead, she leaves open the potential that he might come to us as he did to Frankenstein on Mt. Blanc—at once a human and a monster, our doppelganger with uncanny timing reminding us of our own desires for the sublimer objects of hell. Frankenstein does not return its world back to the state of nature before Frankenstein's creation; instead it leaves Frankenstein's monster as a spirit wandering—haunting Milton's salvation history and an Enlightenment view of nature.

The monster's story, with the exception of his final despair in the concluding epistles and his last journey on the ice, is focused through Frankenstein's recollection. The monster's genesis is outside of the world of possibility given in Milton's account of history and its horror is the

clear result of human creation. But his telos is beyond the narrative—the novel does not actualize the potential for ultimate horror in a race of monsters and the monster's demise is beyond the time of narration. Instead of offering finality and wholeness, the monster's history is open-ended. The narrative however achieves closure—leaving the monster in darkness, Walton cannot perceive what might happen beyond that moment and Shelley does not continue her novel. The novel leaves the monster suicide as his sole option, with the possibility of marriage and total destruction through monstrous generation gone. Frankenstein does not bury the monster, yet at the same time it cannot imagine what would happen if it did not—the monster cannot achieve a fate beyond the fate Milton's God left humankind, death and generation. Still he creates something that Milton did not imagine—the poetry of the fallen, of the Other. He justifies his own place in reality through telling the story of his own creation, like Milton. However, his account is not an apology but a lamentation. As the monster's story lies at the center of Frankenstein, his creative act is the embodiment of the potential of women's poetry as a legitimate act of resistance against Milton's order. However, this nascent literature will remain as Frankenstein's monster, with its creative potential arrested, until the collective imaginary shakes its view free from Milton's impeding bogey.

In telling a story that is both within and in tension with the human—specifically a definition of the human informed by Enlightenment science and Miltonic myth—Frankenstein imagines what could have happened (the generation of a species of human monsters) as a horror story if it would have happened (the deaths of William, Justine, Elizabeth, etc.). Frankenstein, as a myth combining natural objects into the strange and supernatural, figures Milton's bogey in the monster and his creative destruction. In a way he is a figure of hope, for the monster was not fated to horrific violence—he once loved living and demonstrated a remarkable humanness for

an unnamed monster—only driven to it by his exclusion from human meaning and collectivity. Still, the monster cannot ultimately make a life for himself and a place within the human collectivity. Victor Frankenstein and Frankenstein ultimately abort their monster's possible foundation myth, that generation of a species of monsters that can contest the unified order of nature and the hegemonic notion of human collectivity. In this aborted foundation myth, we see the beginnings of a collective imaginary that seeks to call into question previous definitions of the human and we see the origins of the poetics of science fiction.

The cyborg narrative of humanity and history, or How do we read Orlando, Woman on the Edge of Time and The Female Man?

Proceeding from my analysis of Frankenstein, I will analyze three classics of science fiction—Virginia Woolf's Orlando (a sort of foundation myth of queerness, projected into the past), Marge Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time (a foundation myth rooted in the contemporary political moment), and Joanna Russ's The Female Man (an ambiguous utopia and foundation myth projected into the future). Each of these novels imagines a narrative of humanity beyond the constraints of death and generation and marks the movement of women's literature to that 20th century project of a 'secret study' aimed at the achievement of equality and toward a cyborg mythos committed to "partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity". This work is the work of constructing new narratives and new worlds. Joanna Russ describes this feminist poetics of SF in To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction, employing Samuel Delany's rendering of the subjunctivity of narrative as her definition of the generic process of science fiction:

> Subjunctivity is the tension on the thread of meaning that runs between word and object. [For] a piece of reportage, a blanket indicative tension informs the whole series: *this*

> *happened*… The subjunctivity for a series of words labeled naturalistic fiction is defined by: *could have happened*.... [In] SF the subjunctivity level is changed once more… *have not happened*. (16)

Orlando

Written as a literary biography, Virginia Woolf's Orlando combines the fantastical and the historical to represent its subject—the life of Orlando, who began life as a boy in Elizabethan England and is a woman when the novel closes at "the twelfth stroke of midnight, Thursday, the eleventh of October, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-eight" (241). Orlando is indeed a science fiction novel, representing something that had not happened in 1928 (i.e. the metamorphosis of an individual's sex), but it is stylized as a piece of biographical reportage. Other critics have dealt well with how the narrative of Orlando necessitates the sex-change of its subject. The sex change is necessary in order for Orlando to maintain a self same identity as a poet and for Woolf to overcome impediments in the genre of biography:

> Woolf's protagonist is male until the close of the seventeenth century not merely because Orlando's sex-change marks "the entrance of women into the literary marketplace," as Gilbert and Gubar have suggested (39); another reason is that like the details of Judith Shakespeare's life and the details of women's lives in patrilineal societies generally, those of Vita Sackville-West's female ancestors were left unrecorded. (Boehm 195)

Across the centuries and pages of the novel, we can read the historical development of the sexes in its fantastical-biographical account of Orlando. In this way, Woolf turns what seems to be the historical and biographical limitations of women's secondness into the free fantasy of an individual who can be both a man and a woman.

Fragments of identity, narrative, and time form the self-same Orlando whose queerness is represented not only in the content of the narrative but also in its language. Woolf overgoes the queerness of language used on the occasion of Orlando's metamorphosis—"we have no choice left but confess—he was a woman" (102)— with her first confession of love as a woman "'You're a woman, Shel!" she cried. 'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried" (184). Most startlingly, Orlando once again outdoes itself in the final pages of the novel with Orlando's reflection on "the Captain self" or the "Key self" (227) While the biographer asserts that some selves "are too wildly ridiculous to be mentioned in print at all," Woolf gives us a long and wildly contradictory list of the selves that form Orlando's identity:

> For she had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, wheras a person may well have as many thousand. Choosing then, only those selves we have found room for, Orlando may now have called on the boy who cut the nigger's head down…or she may have called upon the young man who fell in love with Sasha; or upon the Courtier; or upon the Ambassador; or upon the Soldier; or upon the Traveller; she may have wanted the woman to come to her; the Gipsy; the Fine Lady; the Hermit; the girl in love with life; the Patroness of Letters; the woman who called Mar (meaning hot baths and evening fires) or Shelmerdine (meaning crocuses in autumn woods) or Bonthrop (meaning the death we die daily) the woman or all three together—which meant more things than we have space to write out—all these selves were different and she may have called upon any one of them" (226).

Orlando's biographer can hold all of these fragments of Orlando's identity together in unity—from that most barbaric Orlando, whose "fathers had been noble since they had been at all" and

who "cut the nigger's head down," (12, 226) to that Orlando who can love so variously that syntax breaks down, and there is not space to write out her life in its full possibility.

Orlando's multiplicity of selves has been the delight of her biographer and part of Orlando's character since boyhood, figured first in an image of Orlando standing in the variegated light made by the family coat of arms:

> Orlando stood now in the midst of the yellow body of an heraldic leopard. When he put his hand on the window-sill to push the window open, it was instantly coloured red, blue, and yellow like a butterfly's wing. Thus, those who like symbols, and have a turn for the deciphering of them, might observe that though the shapely legs, the handsome body, and the well-set shoulders were all of them decorated with various tints of heraldic light, Orlando's face, as he threw the window open, was lit solely by the sun itself…Happy the mother who bears, happier still the biographer who records the life of such a one! Never need she vex herself, nor he invoke the help of novelist or poet. From deed to deed, from glory to glory, from office to office he must go, his scribe following after till they reach what ever seat it may be that is the height of their desire. (12)

Orlando does not always experience this multiplicity of selves with the same delight as the biographer. As a young man, upon seeing his first great love Sasha, the Orlando who loves men vexes him: "When the boy, for alas, a boy it must be—no woman could skate with such speed and vigour—swept almost on tiptoe past him, Orlando was ready to tear his hair with vexation that the person was of his own sex, and thus all embraces were out of the question" (28). As a recently transformed woman, the Orlando who loves women haunts her. Launching directly into the subject of chastity, Orlando's biographer obverses that the beginnings of her sexual life as a woman were "of a very complicated kind." Orlando's anxiety here is similar to her anxiety upon

meeting Sasha—she is vexed by another self—this time one who loves women. "If one has been a man for thirty years or so…if one has held a Queen in one's arms and one or two other ladies, if report be true, of less exalted rank, if one has married a Rosina Pepita, and so on, one does not give such a very great start about that [chastity]" (113-4). She feels herself to be unchaste and dishonored for the very first time and, thinking of her earlier love for Sasha, experiences the anxiety of womanhood: "…if it meant conventionality, meant slavery, meant deceit, meant denying her love, fettering her limbs, pursing her lips, and restraining her tongue, then she would turn about with the ship and set sail once more for the gipsies" (121). Orlando and I reject the notion that Orlando's becoming a woman demonstrates fallen-ness necessarily, but Orlando does experience a feeling of fallen-ness following her metamorphosis.

Orlando's most anxious moment about her identity occurs immediately after the narrator asserts her ability to call upon any of her thousand selves. Orlando, smelling a candle in a shop that recalls her violently and instantly to her erotic feelings for Sasha, is frantic as she drives away. While she, like the biographer, eventually comes to realize that this desire can fit into what the biographer names "the Captain self" or "the Key self" (227), Orlando's understanding of her situation is strikingly different in tone from the biographer's calm, cataloguing one:

> "Haunted!" she cried, suddenly pressing the accelerator. "Haunted! ever since I was a child. There flies the wild goose. It flies past the window out to sea. Up I jumped (she gripped the steering wheel tighter) and stretched after it. But the goose flies too fast. I've seen it here—there—there…Always it flies fast out to sea and always I fling after it words like nets (here she flung her hand out) which shrivel as I've seen nets shrivel drawn on deck with only sea-weed in them. And sometimes there's an inch of silver—six words—in the bottom of the net. But never the great fish who lives in the coral

> groves."…And it was at this moment, when she had ceased to call "Orlando" and was deep in thoughts of something else that the Orlando whom she had called came of its own accord…So she was now darkened, stilled, and become, with the addition of this Orlando, what is called, rightly or wrongly, a single self, a real self. (229-30)

When Orlando ceases to call for herself, ceases the frenzy of searching for unity, she finds a single and real identity. While she can only grasp an inch of silver or six words, rather than her desired great fish, Orlando's selves in all their queerness coalesce. Possibility flashes, and for an instant Orlando's narrative is whole. But before the novel's completion "the present shower[s] down upon her head once more" and she sees the goose once again (239). Orlando leaves her at the narrative present, the moment of its composition, and her reunion with her husband, shaking the novel out of final unity. Orlando cries out ecstatically when she sights the goose, and the ellipsis in her final words imitate her unfulfilled flight after the object of her desire, : "'It is the goose!' Orlando cried. 'The wild goose…'" (241).

Woman on the Edge of Time

Marge Piercy's novel, operating in three parallel worlds, tells the story of Consuela Ramos (Connie) as a potential foundation myth for a future utopia, Mattapoisett. The novel opens with the two most important features of Connie's situation, her dubious sanity and the violence that she experiences: "Connie got up from her kitchen table and walked slowly to the door. Either I saw him or I didn't and I'm crazy for real this time, she thought. 'It's me—Dolly!' Her niece was screaming in the hall…Blood was oozing from Dolly's bruised mouth…" (3). The first event of the novel—Connie's failed attempt to save her niece from her abusive pimp of a boyfriend and a forced abortion—establishes the reader's empathy with Connie for her selfless act while simultaneously pushing Connie into the margins of society and humane treatment,

those institutionalized against their own will. In the course of these opening pages, the reader learns that Connie has had a history of institutionalization after an ambiguous but violent episode with her daughter. Falling victim to the pimp's abuse and lies herself, we experience Connie's institutionalization as a wrong even though the content of her sanity is unknowable in the novel: "Dolly had heard her talking with Luciente: therefore he existed. Or Dolly had heard her talking to herself. Dolly had said the chair was warm: she had been sitting in the other chair in front of the plate from her supper of eggs and beans. She must not think about it now, with Dolly suffering. His story was unbelievable! No, don't think about it." (4).

Through the story of Connie's conversations with Luciente in our world and her eventual visits to Luciente's parallel world, Mattapoisett, we learn that Luciente is not in fact a man but an androgynous woman existing in a distant possible future where gender differs so much that Connie cannot read her (it would be per in Mattapoisett, the oblique case of their only pronoun, person) properly.

> "Much I don't comprehend that led to us," Luciente said gently, arm around her waist as they bumped downhill. "But *not inevitably*, grasp? Those of your time who fought hard for change, often they had myths that a revolution was inevitable. But nothing is! All things interlock. We are only one possible future. Do you grasp?"
>
> … "But you exist." She [Connie] tried to laugh. "So it all worked out."
>
> "Maybe. Yours is a crux-time. Alternate universes coexist. Probabilities clash and possibilities wink out forever."…"You're learning, how not?" Luciente stooped to peer into her face. "Our ancestor." (169-70)

Living at a crux-time in history, Connie will determine the possibility of a future that exists beyond and as an alternative to the violence of her present situation—this future is not an

inevitable end of a unified history. Probabilities and worlds fracture and a utopian future is one that Connie and other ancestors of Mattapoisett must work toward, especially at crux-times.

Through her relationship to two possible future worlds, Luciente's Mattapoisett and Gildina's dystopia (a possible future dystopia where the values of capitalism have taken over so completely that women live either as temporarily contracted sex workers or in a social position called "moms" who are "cored to make babies all the time" (281)) Connie enters the sphere of action. In order to make Luciente's utopian Mattapoisett possible, Connie must resist the experimental brain implant that the doctors at her institution see as a cure for her insanity, which will make her an "experimental monster:"

> She was the experiment. They would rape her body, her brain, her self. After this she could not trust her own feelings. She would not be her own. She would be their experimental monster. Their plaything…She did not want to pass over to Mattapoisett tonight; she wanted to taste the last dregs of her identity before they took it from her…Whoever owned this place, these cities, whoever owned those glittering glassy office buildings in midtown filled with the purr of money turning over…they gave nothing back. They took and took and left their garbage choking the air, the river, the sea itself. Choking her. A life of garbage. Human garbage. She had too little of what her body needed and too little of what her soul could imagine. She had been able to do little in the years of her life, and that little had been ill paid or punished. The rest was garbage. (270-1)

Like Frankenstein's monster, Connie has been denied her position in the human collectivity and, while she too could have been otherwise, turns to violence. Using the opportunity of a temporary release from her institution, Connie arms herself with the poison that will be the last

option left to her to try to save herself and Mattapoisett. In a lament one could imagine in the mouth of Frankenstein's monster, Connie begins to resolve herself to kill: "'If only they had left me something!' she whispered. Still trembling, she thought…Only one person to love. Just one little corner of loving of my own. For that love I'd have borne it all and I'd never have fought back. I would have obeyed….*But you were so greedy, so cruel! One of them, just one, you could have left me!* But I have nothing. Why shouldn't I strike back?" (271, emphasis my own).

Implicating the reader in the violence and isolation that had led her to this last desperate act, Woman on the Edge of Time makes us come face to face with the inhumanity of our present, which makes Connie's life unlivable without resorting to violence and constitutes what could prevent Mattapoisett from being an actual future. The novel concludes ambiguously, we cannot know whether Connie's actions have secured a utopian future for our world. After she kills, Connie cannot reach over to Mattapoisett and Luciente: "She thought of Luciente, but she could no longer reach over. She could no longer catch. She had annealed her mind and she was not a receptive woman. She had hardened. But she thought of Mattapoisett….for you who will be born from my best hopes, to you I dedicate my act of war. At least once I fought and won" (364). While Woman on the Edge of Time refuses to endorse Connie's violence as a just act, refuses to make an unambiguous conclusion on her sanity, and refuses a unified narrative of its three worlds, the novel serves as a call to action. Woman on the Edge of Time in no way guarantees the existence of Mattapoisett—utopia is not inevitable. The work toward Mattapoisett is coterminous with the effort to make Connie's life and lives like hers livable. Even if we are to reject Mattapoisett, or even utopia, as fantasy and interpret Connie's narrative as wholly the product of her mental instability, with the stakes of her story being no more than the lives of a few doctors, this call to action is significant. Concluding with a chapter entitled "Excerpts from

the Official History of Consuelo Camacho Ramos," the novel reveals Connie's diagnosis for the first time—schizophrenia. Leaving open the possibility that the parallel worlds of Woman on the Edge of Time are simply the product of an extended psychotic episode, the call to action is not muted—at the very least, in its clinical summary which cannot capture the depth of Connie's character, intellect and emotion, the novel calls for new narratives of the human that give Consuelo Ramos her full due.

The Female Man

The Female Man's monster is a cyborg—she is both the apocalyptic telos of the masculinist myth of woman's secondness and the utopia that lies beyond that 'end.' This highly de-focalized narrative represents four characters that occupy four distinct worlds. The main narrator, the "femaleman" Joanna, occupies our present—her subjectivity is a product of our material history. Narrative time, however, passes in the parallel universe of Jeannine. As the only character whose narrative is in the third person, Jeannine lives in a parallel present still stagnating in the Great Depression where neither WWII nor the women's liberation movement occurred. Janet, a second first person narrator and citizen of a utopia from another future, and Joanna converge upon Jeannine's world. On one level of reading, this novel describes Jeannine's development as a subject, becoming a narrative voice in the first person—a consciousness raising through her interactions with these other women. Still these women's fractured narrated subjectivities and temporalities connect more completely when the third first person narrator Jael—a comparative ethnologist/terrorist from a future dystopia where men and women live in separate societies engaged in a perpetual violent struggle—contacts the three other women and explains the relationship between the four women and their worlds.

Before Jael imparts her knowledge, Joanna first represents the relationship between these parallel realities following the introduction of Jeannine and Janet's worlds. Joanna negotiates the existence of our present, a present world with different material conditions than our own, and the future utopia Whileaway with an explanation of a fecund reality of infinite multiplicity. This explanation of the scientific understanding of the text underlies the technology that moves the plot of this novel, a device that teleports instantly between space-times in alternate worlds of possibility:

> Every choice begets at least two worlds of possibility…To carry this line of argument further, there must be an infinite number of possible universes (such is the fecundity of God) for there is no reason to imagine Nature as prejudiced in favor of human action…It's possible, too, that there is no such thing as one clear line or strand of probability, and that we live on a sort of twisted braid…Thus it is probable that Whileaway—a name for the Earth ten centuries from now, but not *our* Earth, if you follow me—will find itself not at all affected by this sortie into somebody else's past. And vice versa, of course. The two might as well be independent worlds. Whileaway, you may gather, is in the future. But not *our* future. (6-7)

These independent worlds exist in different universes with distinct temporalities. Joanna's account, then, leaves us wondering how these three temporalities can collide in Jeannine's present reality and create the narrative. If Janet's adventure into someone else's past cannot causally affect her world, then what is the content of the plot? Can the future causally affect our present, or a present? Such uncertainties proliferate when Jael's voice enters the text in the first chapter of Part II. How does a character that has not yet entered Jeanine's world find narrative

voice in the text? How can she exist in relation to these women if she is indeed from another world?

> *Who am I? I know who I am, but what's my brand name? Me with a new face, a puffy mask. Laid over the old one in strips of plastic, a blond Hallowe'en ghoul on top of the S.S. uniform. I was a skinny beanpole underneath except for the hands, which were similarly treated, and that very impressive face. I did this once in my line of business, which I'll go into later and scared the idealistic children who lived downstairs. Their delicate skins red with offended horror. Their clear young voices raised in song (at three in the morning). I'm not Jeannine. I'm not Janet. I'm not Joanna…You'll meet me later*. (19)

Jael has knowledge of the three other women before she has interacted with them in the narrative—she can offer the knowledge of how their four temporalities are braided together. For now we only know Jael as a ghoul that haunts multiple worlds. We will learn later that she is a militant anthropologist from a highly technologized dystopian future on a personal mission to gain knowledge of her 'brand name' as well as a political mission that horrifies 'idealistic children.' Jael reveals to the others that they are four embodiments of the same genotype in four distinct universes and hints at the causal relationship between their four worlds:

> The three of you got together and I pulled you all in. Look at yourselves. Genetic patterns sometimes repeat themselves from possible present universe to possible present universe; this is also one of the elements that can vary between universes. There is repetition of genotypes in the far future too, sometimes. Here is Janet from the far future, but not my future or yours; here are the two of you from almost the same moment of time (but not as you see it!), both of those moments only a little behind mine; yet I won't

> happen in the world of either of you. We are less alike than identical twins, to be sure, but much more alike than strangers have any right to be. Look at yourselves again… We ought to be equally long-lived but we won't be. We ought to be equally healthy but we're not…We ought to think alike and feel alike and act alike, but of course we don't. So plastic is humankind! Do you remember the old story of the Doppelgänger? This is the double you recognize instantly, with whom you feel a mysterious kinship. An instant sympathy, that informs you at once that the other is really your very own self" (161-2)

In the same way these women ought to feel, think and live similarly, if there was a single temporal course these four women ought to be similarly fated. However, Jael has foreknowledge that what lies in Janet's and her own presents will not occur in Jeanine and Joanna's future.

The future is plastic in the same way as humankind. What constitutes this divergent course of history for both Joanna's and Jeanine's realities, then? It is exactly by meeting their future selves, and exploring their worlds of alternate possibility that these women will avoid Jael's dystopia and Janet's utopia. After this revelation, these four women's worlds meet—they are 'diplomats' for their worlds and travel to the dystopian Manland, where they witness Jael assassinate a man. This journey reveals to the women the multiplicity of potential realities and the relationality between their four distinct worlds, fracturing any sense of unity in identity or history. The final scene in the dystopian future renders the sexual mores of Jael's separate society, where Womanland's scientists have created 'male' sexual partners as a sort of programmed domestic servant, a cybernetic second sex. The 'three J's' are voyeurs to Jael's sexual practices with Davy, one of these cyborgs. Upon realization she is not alone, Jael reflects:

> The original germ-plasm was chimpanzee, I think, but none of the behavior is organically controlled any more. True, he does have his minimal actions which he pursues without

> me—he eats, eliminates, sleeps, and climbs in and out of his exercise box—but even these are caused by a standing computer pattern. And I take precedence, of course. It is theoretically possible that Davy has (tucked away in some nook of his cerebrum) consciousness of a kind that may never even touch his active life—is Davy a poet in his own peculiar way?—but I prefer to believe not. His consciousness—such as it is and I am willing to grant it for the sake of argument—is nothing, a picturesque collocation of words. It is experientially quite empty, and above all, it is nothing that need concern you and me. Davy's soul lies somewhere else; it's an outside soul. Davy's soul is in Davy's beauty; and Beauty is always empty, always on the outside. Isn't it? (199)

This moment when "Something pierces the sweetest solitude" represents a moment of 'mysterious kinship' between the four J's in which they come to knowledge of themselves by experiencing an alternative model of sexual difference (199). Immediately following this moment Jael makes her political desires known (bases in the other worlds for Womanland's military conquest) and the text enters the 'Book of Joanna.'

This final section establishes the relationship of Manland, Womanland and Whileaway to the present. Jeanine feels compelled to allegiance with Jael, Joanna seems ambivalent and Janet refuses to enter into political concord with Womanland. Jeanine is a subject of the present, but her consciousness is so alienated from the human collectivity that she can wish its destruction, 'You can take the whole place over; I wish you would. My whole world calls me Jeannie. See?' (211). Her experience in Womanland has made her world strange to her and makes her seek its destruction—the text could bring some readers to feel similarly. Understanding what it's like to be a member of the second sex, Jeanine feels a desire to dominate like Jael—she is comfortable with the prospect of a lover like Davy and a world like Womanland. Janet, however, will not let

Jael's 'bad-angelry, luminous with hate' into her utopian world (212). Following her refusal, Jael rages and reveals the last aspect of the four worlds' relationship:

> Let me give you something to carry away with you, friend: the 'plague' you talk of is a lie. *I know*. The world-lines around you are not so different from yours or mine or theirs and there is no plague in any of them, not any of them. Whileaway's plague is a big lie. Your ancestors lied about it. It is I who gave you your 'plague,' my dear about which you can now pietize and moralize to your heart's content; I, I, I, I am the plague, Janet Evason. I and the war I fought built your world for you, I and those like me, we gave you a thousand years of peace and love and the Whileawayan flowers nourish themselves on the bones of the men we have slain. (211)

It is only by Jael's hateful bad-angelry that Whileaway and Janet exist. The utopian whom "we don't believe in and [who] we deride but who is in secret our savior from utter despair, who appears Heaven-high…who comes from the place where the labia of the sky and horizon kiss each other so that Whileawayans call it the Door and know that all legendary things come therefrom" emerges from extreme violence (212-3). Violence done to the minds and bodies of men, impossible on Whileaway (because all the men are dead, significantly this utopia does not lack violence) and quite the opposite of the case in Joanna and Jeanine's worlds, is a consequence of Jael's future—this is the history that Janet's utopia must level with and the future Joanna must turn away from.

Janet is the salvation of our present, the telos of the history of observable worlds, but her subversion of despair is only accomplished by Jael and her war. If we wish to avoid Jael's dystopia, we will also forgo a utopia like Whileaway—for there is no plague in any known world-lines and that constitutes the origin story of Janet's utopia. How then can Janet save us?

The figure of a legendary potential future is 'the labia of the sky and the horizon,' the Whileawayan door—a vision of utopia beyond the worlds imagined in The Female Man. This is the edge from which things emerge, a figure of creative energy. This is the boundary that Janet traverses when she leaves Whileaway and the one across which she crosses back. This crossing over, experiencing an alternative and finding new knowledge by it, constitutes salvation and legend. The Whileawayan psychology tends toward an 'irritable solipsism'—but "Eternal optimism hides behind this dissatisfaction, however; Whileawayans cannot forget that early paradise and every new face, every new day, every smoke, every dance, brings back life's possibilities. Also sleep and eating, sunrise, weather, the seasons, machinery, gossip, and the eternal temptations of art" (52). The novel allows for the same thing, inviting us to bring possibility into life by imagining another kind of world-line outside of Jael's narrative.

Delighting in the utopian in the quotidian, Whileawayans perceive paradise and possibility in their relationship to each other and reality. Janet overcomes the despair of solipsism even in Jeannine's world, finding possibility in her relationship with the teenaged Laura, despite Whileaway's taboo on sex across significant age difference. Janet discovers possibility and remembers and recreates this experiential feeling of 'paradise' between humans and with the world, even in another world, our world. Learning of the possibility of a dystopian and a utopian future, Joanna's contact with her future potential selves brings new possibility for life in her world. Jael goes off with Jeannine, Janet returns home and Joanna watches them go. Discovering a mythic alternative, Joanna's future is now open for her to make: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we will be free. I swear it on my own head. I swear it on my ten fingers; We will be ourselves. Until then I am silent; I can no more. I am God's typewriter and the ribbon is typed out" (213). This potential free future exists beyond the narrative, when these

four women's worlds have been typed out. But indeed, this Book of Joanna shows foresight of this future for our present:

> Do not complain when at last you become quaint and old-fashioned, when you grow as outworn as the crinolines of a generation ago and are classed with *Spicy Western Stories*, *Elsie Dinsmore*, and *The Son of the Sheik*; do not mutter angrily to yourself when young persons read you to hrooch and hrch and guffaw, wondering what the dickens you were all about. Do not get glum when you are no longer understood, little book. Do not curse your fate. Do not reach up from readers' laps and punch the readers' noses.
>
> Rejoice, little book!
>
> For on that day, we will be free. (213-4)

Is The Female Man becoming quaint and old-fashioned? Unable to represent the utopian without naming men its enemy, on one level of reading The Female Man clings to identitarian politics—I, I, I, I is its plague. Joanna and her book are on the edge of a political struggle—Janet's world, in so far as it is causally connected to Jael's future, does not represent a livable human life, but the present is not satisfactory. We are not yet free. We are not yet ourselves. Thus the novel ends, unable to continue envisioning new worlds because The Female Man cannot look too far beyond that last part of Milton's bogey, the I that blocks the view.

These three novels work to create new narratives and new possibilities through their representation of events that have not happened. They imagine/author histories other than our own—through multiplicity of identity in Orlando, multiplicity of worlds in Woman on the Edge of Time, and the multiplicity of both in The Female Man— in order to illumine our own position in history. In doing so, they imagine and create something like Eliot's comparative historical consciousness. We saw how Dido's, Eve's and the monster's tragedies create the poetry of the

fallen within and against the poetry of hierarchical domination, and (if partially) allow us to turn away from the Roman, Christian, and Miltonic narrative definitions of the human that produce their tragedies. In the same way, these "theorist for cyborgs'" imaginative works make a turn (if partial) away from Milton's bogey or the poetry of hierarchical domination. Without relying on redemption narratives, their poetry brings possibility to fallen-ness (haunted Orlando/the wild goose, embattled Connie/Mattapoisett, and Joanna/a utopia other than Whileaway). These novels of partiality and multiplicity perform the work described as writing as a woman in A Room of One's Own:

> It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, for if two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world, how should we manage with one only? Ought not education bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities? For we have too much likeness as it is, and if an explorer should come back and bring word of other sexes looking through the branches of other trees at other skies, nothing would be of greater service to humanity… (96)

Writing the vastness and variety of the world, these novels do not bring word of other lives and worlds—instead, they create these other lives and worlds in their words. With open-ended narratives (i.e. the ambiguous ending of Woman on the Edge of Time and the forward seeking endings of Orlando and The Female Man they not only create new stories about humanity and history but also summon other works to do the same in order to add to this vastness and variety.

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Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. New York: Routledge, 1991. 149-81.

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Annotated Bibliography

Aeneid

Lowrie, Michèle. "Vergil and Founding Violence." Proceedings, Symposium: Derrida/America, The Present State of America's Europe Culture. Cardozo Law Review, 2005. 949-76.

Lowrie's philological project is aimed to show "that Vergil understood the problematics of cultural non-self-identity" and to demonstrate that the opposed forces of "founding violence" and "pluralistic opening unto the other" can exist simultaneously, if complicatedly, in the text (947). Her analysis of the human and divine violence in the tragedy of Turnus nurtured my reading of Dido. I hope that my reading of Dido captures something of her assertion that the stakes of reading violence in the Aeneid are justice and national identity, not just in the Roman but also in the contemporary context (949).

Stahl, Hans-Peter with Kurt Raaflaub and Mark Toher, editors. "The Death of Turnus: Augustan Vergil and the Political Rival" in Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1990. 174-211.

This chapter is a direct refusal of the "tragedy" of Turnus and some of its lines of argument could stand as a critique of my reading of Dido as a tragic figure. Yet, this piece (and my wider instruction with Dr. Stahl, sine qua non) taught me the importance of close philological reading of the poem true to its Roman context and helped my attempt to avoid that great problem in the history of Vergil scholarship—interpretations "repeatedly show (how the individual (even the critical) scholar was tied to political and sociological preconceptions of his own time" (178). I also owe much of my reading of Aeneid II-III to seminar sessions with him, concerning how Aeneas's narrative in these books establishes the historical and divine authority to his Italian end.

Vergil with R.D. Williams, editor and commentator. Aeneid I-VI and Aeneid VII-XII (2 volumes). London: Bristol Classical P, 1972

The first complete commentary to appear in English in over one hundred years, Williams's work was valuable to my translation and criticism not only for its inclusiveness but also for its insight into the history of reading Vergil. He identifies the experience of reading Vergil in the twentieth century—"We respond especially to his exploration of contrasting attitudes and ideals, his juxtaposition of public and private aspiration, or divine and human causation in men's affairs" (ix). While the experience of reading I put forth differs from his description of a twentieth century reading and the particularities of his analysis, I gained much from the dynamic contrasts he made.

Vergil with R.G. Austin, commentator. Aeneidos: Liber Primos. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1971.

This book served as my introduction to Vergil commentary—with its wide-minded approach to Book I, which "has no single dominant subject," it set the stage for my consideration of the complexities of Aeneid I and the poem in toto. Austin kept Vergil's "sensitive imagination and

deep dramatic instinct" at the front of my mind in my reading Dido and "the full possibilities that a mythical confrontation with Carthage would have for an epic of imperial Rome" (xi).

Paradise Lost

Froula, Christine. "When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy." Critical Inquiry 10.2 (1983). 321-47.

This article's reading of Paradise Lost and its larger discussion of the canon and myth opened up the space for my reading of Eve's tragedy as well as what I see of partiality and possibility in contemporary feminist poetics. She identifies something similar in feminist creative and critical work opening the canon, "redistributing" the power of literary tradition, and "mak[ing] for a better world" (344).

Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1989.

Milton's bogey is a central, if not the central, figure of my paper—and Woolf's great lecture, along with Haraway's manifesto, was the source of my research. In articulating Milton's bogey as the obstacle for women in literature to overcome and a world of possibility beyond the current state of life and literature, Woolf created a literary history that resonated with me and one to which I hope to contribute some.

Frankenstein

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000.

Gilbert and Gubar's excellent discussion of women reading Milton in general and specifically Frankenstein as a reading of Milton nourished my thinking much, especially regarding ideas of secondness and generation.

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. New York: Routledge, 1991. 149-81

Haraway's allusion to Frankenstein's monster—"Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos" (151)—brought out how I read Frankenstein as a SF classic, different from contemporary cyborg SF. However, the thinking of other critics (like Gilbert and Gubar) allowed me to bring out that other hope of Frankenstein's monster, to articulate his story and show how it could have been otherwise—in my reading of Frankenstein, I also attempt to bring out what Frankenstein's monster shares with cyborgs in his literary legacy.

Seabury, Marcia Bundy. "The Monsters We Create: Woman on the Edge of Time and Frankenstein." Critique 42.2 (2001). 131-43.

With a central goal of "develop[ing] a sense of a 'continuous literary tradition' of speculative fiction by women, of these works speaking to one another," Seabury's article helped me access Frankenstein in dialogue with contemporary SF (132). She identifies the theme of alternative possible futures in Woman on the Edge of Time and brings the same out in Shelley's novel's place in literary history. Frankenstein's offspring is the SF genre (140), and thinking along these lines I hope I do something to modify Haraway's reading of Frankenstein's monster.

Feminist SF

Delany, Samuel. "Joanna Russ and D. W. Griffith" PMLA, Special Topic: Science Fiction and Literary Studies: The Next Millennium 11.3 (2004). 500-8.

Considering Delany's self-described "large" claims about Joanna Russ as one of the "finest" and "most necessary" American writers in the second half of the twentieth century (500), I began to look beyond my initial discomfort the novel's utopianism (figured in Janet and Jael) and to form what I hope to be a reading of The Female Man that renders the full range of possibilities the novel opens.

Halberstam, Judith. In a Queer Time and Place: Transgendered Bodies, Subcultural Lives. New York: NYUP, 2005.

Halberstam's work on narratives of time/history and the political/practical stakes of narratives' relationships with identity was formative in my thinking about literature and its historicity as political. While I see the influence of this text most in my thinking about feminist SF, Halberstam's work has affected my reading widely.

Jameson, Fredric. Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions. London: Verso, 2005.

Jameson's analysis, where the political meets the poetical, nurtured my thinking about narrative and utopia (and while it does not often emerge to the surface in my paper, their relationship with social movement/the post-globalization left). I follow his notion of utopia as political, "an unusual destiny for a literary form" (xi), and his subsequent assertion—"It is not only the social and historical raw materials of the Utopian construct which are of interest…but also the representational relations established between them—such as closure, narrative and exclusion or inversion" (xiv). I hope that my paper offers a literary history that can contribute to explanation of the course of this "unusual destiny."

Le Guin, Ursula. Lavinia: A Novel. New York: First Mariner Books, 2009.

While not a science fiction novel in any direct sense, this novel has a similar poetical project to the one I find in these works of feminist SF. While Lavinia can well be read as a translation of the content (and to a significant extent, the language) of Aeneid VII-XII, Lavinia's story (quite brief and marginalized in Vergil) is full of depth and possibility in Le Guin's novel. The ending engages with directly with the theme of women and Vergil's poetry. While Le Guin expresses

the fact that the novel is "in no way an attempt to change or complete the story of Aeneas" (274), its conclusion creates partiality and possibility out of Vergil's poem:

> But I will not die. I cannot. I will never go down among the shadows under Albunea…I will not speak to Creusa of Troy, as I once thought I might, or Dido of Carthage, proud and silent, still bearing the great sword wound in her breast. They lived and died as women do and as the poet sang them. But he did not sing me enough life to die. He only gave me immortality…I can hear the endless sound of the engines of war on all the roads of the world. But I stay here. I fly among the trees on soft wings that make no sound. Sometimes I call out, but not in a human voice: My cry is soft and quavering: i, i, I cry: Go on, go. Only sometimes my soul wakes as a woman again, and then when I listen I can hear silence, and in the silence his voice. (271-2)

Le Guin, Ursula. The Left Hand of Darkness. New York: Ace Books, 2000.

One of the first science fiction novels I read, The Left Hand of Darkness served as an introduction to the other worlds and human lives that emerge in the genre. Genly Ai's narrative was the first taste I had of the feminist SF poetics that creates alternative possibilities and futures, in this case through imagining sexual difference otherwise.

Muñoz, José Esteban. Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity. New York: New York UP, 2009.

Muñoz's discussion of queer utopianism and the queer aesthetic brought much out in my reading of partiality and possibilities in feminist SF. His criticism was especially influential in my reading of the forward-seeking conclusions of Woolf's and Russ's novels and of the genre in general: "Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing…The aesthetic, especially the queer aesthetic, frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity" (1).