Naming in Paradise: Milton and the language of Adam and Eve, John Leonard, Clarendon Press, 1990, 0198129580, 9780198129585, 304 pages. Names and naming are more important to Paradise Lost than may first appear. This critical study traces Milton's use of prelapsarian and postlapsarian names and the various distinctions that infiltrate Paradise Lost. Through close analysis of the poem's words and narrative, Leonard uncovers areas of meaning that have previously been lost to modern readers, supplying a valuable interpretive key to many important passages. Taking Adam's naming of the animals as his starting point, Leonard explores such topics as the naming of Eve, the blotting out of the rebel angels' names, and Satan's deliberate misapplication of names. By relating these and other topics to the larger episodes of the Fall of the Angels and the Fall of Adam and Eve, Leonard enriches our reading of Paradise Lost. Referring to Milton's earlier editors, as well as modern critics, he provides new insights into such questions as: was Milton of the Devil's party?; were the angels self-tempted?; was Adam right to chooses death with Eve?. Intended primarily for Milton specialists, the warm and lively style of Naming in Paradise ensures that this book will be accessible both to graduate and undergraduate students..

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Divine word Milton and the redemption of language, Robert L. Entzminger, Aug 1, 1985, 188 pages.

The Secret History of Lucifer (New Edition)
The Satanic Epic, Neil Forsyth, 2003, Literary Criticism & Collections, 382 pages. The Satan of Paradise Lost has fascinated generations of readers. This book attempts to explain how and why Milton's Satan is so seductive. It reasserts the importance of Satan.


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Abdiel Adam and Eve Adam's naming Ambiguous animals argue argument Beast Beelzebub Belial Bentley blotted C. S. Lewis call'd Castalian Spring Christopher Ricks cited claim command Coriolanus Cratylus Creation creatures critics Death deputy devils divorce earth Empson Enemie enmity Eve's name evil Fall fallen angels fallen world Fish Fowler fruit Genesis glory God's Gods hath hear Heav'n Hebrew Hell Hesperus human Hume notes Hymn innocence interpretation John Milton knowledge lines Lucifer Lucifer's meaning Messiah Milton Milton's Grand Style morning star natural language never Newton night original name Paradise Lost poem poet poet's praise prelapsarian prelapsarian language Raphael rapture rebel angels recognize Richardson Satan speaks Satan's name sense serpent servility Son's sound speech Stanley Fish Starr suggestion Surprised tells Temptation thee things thir thou Throne titles Tree Tree's name twilight understanding vertue VIII vocabulary voice William Empson words

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Paradise Lost is generally agreed to be our greatest epic, even the greatest work of literature written in the English language. Given this, it is rather strange to find a benign strain of criticism which denies the very Englishness of this epic. From as early as the eighteenth century when Samuel Johnson concluded that Milton 'wrote no language', to the twentieth century when T.S. Eliot claimed that Milton 'did damage to the English language' and F.R. Leavis asserted that 'Milton had renounced the English language', the language of Paradise Lost has been embroiled in controversy.

Although one can safely conclude that Milton did write in the English tongue (to be more precise, the early modern English of the Renaissance), different languages resonate throughout this epic. Biographers postulate that Milton knew as many as ten languages, among them Latin, Greek, Italian, Dutch and even Hebrew. Given this range of linguistic knowledge, it is hardly surprising to find a high level of awareness with regard to the etymology (i.e. the linguistic origins) of the words he used. But before we consider how he manipulated the senses in which he used his words, we must make a foray into biblical realms in order to understand how Milton viewed language.

At the beginning of the Book of John, we find the famous formulation: 'In the beginning was the
Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (1:1). In Christian theology, this 'Word' is the creative power of God and is usually equated with the Son. In Paradise Lost, Milton makes this association explicit; Milton's God addresses and names the Son 'My word, my wisdom, and effectual might' (III.170) and later the 'omnific Word' (VII.217).2 When God addresses the Son, God's words become the Word and take effect:

Samuel Johnson, in his dictionary, uses the first two lines of this quotation to illustrate the definition of the word 'word' as 'The second person of the ever adorable Trinity'.3 It is the Word/Son that actually performs God's will. The second line of this quotation can become a wider formula for the dynamic of the relationship between the Son and God: 'This I perform, speak thou, and be it done'.

There is a theory of language called Speech Act Theory which identifies certain types of utterance (speech acts) that perform actions rather than simply saying or describing something.4 The words God speaks at the Creation are the ultimate and original speech act; as narrated in Genesis and Paradise Lost, God only has to speak and the words come into effect:

Milton inverts the arrangement of the identification of the voice and the spoken words themselves, thus absorbing God's voice entirely into the poetic lines. 'Sprung' is an inverted iamb, mirroring the initial inverted foot of 'Let there be&#8230;' to assert a metrical alignment that parallels the semantic and tangible fulfilment. In both the Bible and Paradise Lost, the coordinating conjunction 'and' asserts the success of this speech act, as God only has to say the words for their substance to be realised. Twice in Book VII, we encounter 'He named' (252, 274), as a synonym for 'he created'. God's naming of the world, then, is equivalent to its creation, as the very naming of things initiates their existence as realities.

Satan is an inveterate liar who abuses language for his own evil purposes. Satan's language is 'Ambiguous and with double sense deluding' (Paradise Regained, I.435), whereas the Son's language (and by extension God's) enforces a kind of linguistic harmony where 'Thy actions to thy words accord' (Paradise Regained, III.9). In Paradise Lost, Satan's 'ambiguous words' (V.703, VI.568) act as 'persuasive' traps, 'replete with guile' (IX.737, 733). He utters 'high words, that bore | Semblance of worth not substance' (I.528), and it is worth bearing this in mind should you be tempted to succumb to his enticing rhetoric, as Eve or, more recently the poets Shelley and Blake have been known to do! God's words are necessarily congruent with their meaning (God is unable to lie). But while Satan lacks the power of speech acts, he has the sophistical ability to dissemble.

In Eden, Adam and Eve are able to speak a language in which there is a natural correspondence between the things and the words they use to name them. In the Tetrachordon (one of his divorce tracts), Milton points out 'Adam had the wisdom giv'n him to know all creatures, and to name them according to their properties' (CPW, II.602). In Paradise Lost, we find the following lines which record Adam's first words:

In defending the Latinate language used by Milton, Christopher Ricks argues for the ability of the original (often Latinate) senses of words to take us 'back to a time when there were no infected words because there were no infected actions'.5 That is, to a time before language along with mankind, was corrupted in the Fall. But it is worth bearing in mind that words have no real etymology in Eden. From our fallen perspective, we can only approximate this kind of linguistic purity as we attempt to put ourselves back in the shoes of Adam and Eve (not that they wore shoes until they were fallen, of course).

While you're probably familiar with the idea of puns, it is in Paradise Lost that the so-called 'anti-pun' comes into play. This term, coined by Ricks in The Force of Poetry, describes a pun which denies rather than incorporates multiple meanings: 'whereas in a pun there are two senses which either get along or quarrel, in an anti-pun there is only one sense admitted but there is another sense denied admission'.6 The problem in Paradise Lost is that if we include the fallen meaning in Edenic puns we inadvertently corrupt the pure prelapsarian meaning. This problem has been formulated into an idea of 'reader response' by Stanley Fish in his work, Surprised by Sin.
Stanley Fish argues that the reader's experience of this poem can be formulated into a well-trodden path of interpretation. He sees the purpose of this poem as educating the reader into an awareness of his own fallen position and the distance which separates the reader from original Edenic innocence. The process of reading this poem, then, is one of repeatedly falling into Milton's ready-made traps, being brought up short, our understanding being corrected, until we finally emerge a fitter, healthier reader, with retrained perspective perception. Milton in this manner trains his reader to become his 'fit audience' (VII.31). Because we are fallen, we wrongly construe Milton's words based on our own infected understanding. For example, look up the word 'wanton' in two of the places it occurs in Paradise Lost: IV.629, IX.1015. Although the word is the same, the senses in which it is used are crucially different, as I'm sure you can see.

Just as man fell, so language too came plummeting down around man's ears and, just as man rose again, so language too was put back on its feet, with more than a little help from God. On the day of Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to purify and redeem language from its fallen post-Babelic state of 'jangling noise' and 'hideous gabble' (XII.55, 56); the Spirit descended as 'tongues like of fire' (Acts 2:3) and mankind was once more able to understand each other and spread God's word. In the final pages of Robert L. Entzminger's outstanding book on Milton's language, he concludes that the felix culpa (or fortunate fall, an idea that celebrates the fall as the occasioning of Christ's sacrifice) is a concept which extends to language. That is to say, the fall is actually a blessing in disguise as it enabled the existence of multiple languages and sanctioned each language's own complexities and ambiguities - the very features of language which are most prominently at play in poetry. Raphael and Milton narrate 'what surmounts the reach | Of human sense' and they do so 'By likening spiritual to corporeal forms' (V.571, 573), making the 'unspeakable' (V.156) writeable through poetic means, which have been sanctified by God in order to allow man to come closer to comprehending the divine ineffable.

4 In the words of J. L. Austin (the founding philosopher of speech act theory), a speech act is a special case where 'the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action' (How to Do Things with Words (Oxford, 1975), p.8). He gives as examples the naming of a ship, or the marriage vows in a wedding ceremony.

Paradise Lost is an epic poem in blank verse by the 17th-century English poet John Milton (1608-1674). It was originally published in 1667 in ten books, with a total of over ten thousand individual lines of verse. A second edition followed in 1674, changed into twelve books (in the manner of the division of Virgil's Aeneid) with minor revisions throughout and a note on the versification.[1] It is considered by critics to be Milton's "major work", and the work helped to solidify his reputation as one of the greatest English poets of his time.[2]

The poem is separated into twelve "books" or sections, and the length of each book varies greatly (the longest being Book IX, with 1,189 lines, and the shortest Book VII, having 640). The Arguments at the head of each book were added in subsequent imprints of the first edition. Originally published in ten books, in 1674 a fully "Revised and Augmented" edition with a new division into twelve books was issued. This is the edition that is generally used today.

Milton's story has two narrative arcs: one is of Satan (Lucifer) and the other is of Adam and Eve. It begins after Satan and the other rebel angels have been defeated and banished to Hell, or, as it is also called in the poem, Tartarus. In Pandæmonium, Satan employs his rhetorical skill to organise his followers; he is aided by Mammon and Beelzebub. Belial and Moloch are also present. At the end of the debate, Satan volunteers to poison the newly created Earth and God's new and most favoured creation, Mankind. He braves the dangers of the Abyss alone in a manner reminiscent of Odysseus or Aeneas. After an arduous traverse of the Chaos outside Hell, he enters God's new material World, and later the Garden of Eden.

At several points in the poem, an Angelic War over Heaven is recounted from different perspectives. Satan's rebellion follows the epic convention of large-scale warfare. The battles between the faithful angels and Satan's forces take place over three days. The final battle involves the Son of God single-handedly defeating the entire legion of angelic rebels and banishing them from Heaven.
Following the purging of Heaven, God creates the World, culminating in his creation of Adam and Eve. While God gave Adam and Eve total freedom and power to rule over all creation, He gave them one explicit command: not to eat from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil on penalty of death.

The story of Adam and Eve's temptation and fall is a fundamentally different, new kind of epic: a domestic one. Adam and Eve are presented for the first time in Christian literature as having a full relationship while still being without sin. They have passions and distinct personalities. Satan, disguised in the form of a serpent, successfully tempts Eve to eat from the Tree by preying on her vanity and tricking her with rhetoric. Adam, learning that Eve has sinned, knowingly commits the same sin. He declares to Eve that since she was made from his flesh, they are bound to one another so that if she dies, he must also die. In this manner, Milton portrays Adam as a heroic figure, but also as a greater sinner than Eve, as he is aware that what he is doing is wrong.

After eating the fruit, Adam and Eve have lustful sex, and at first, Adam is convinced that Eve was right in thinking that eating the fruit would be beneficial. However, they soon fall asleep and have terrible nightmares, and after they awake, they experience guilt and shame for the first time. Realizing that they have committed a terrible act against God, they engage in mutual recrimination. Eve's pleas to Adam reconcile them somewhat. Her encouragement enables Adam and Eve both to approach God, to "bow and sue for grace with suppliant knee", and to receive grace from God. Adam is shown a vision by the angel Michael, in which Adam witnesses everything that will happen to mankind until the Great Flood. Adam is very upset by this vision of humankind's future, and so Michael also tells him about humankind's potential redemption from original sin through Jesus Christ (whom Michael calls "King Messiah").

Satan is the first major character introduced in the poem. Formerly called Lucifer, the most beautiful of all angels in Heaven, he's a tragic figure who describes himself with the now-famous quote "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n." He is introduced to Hell after he leads a failed rebellion to wrestle control of Heaven from God. Satan's desire to rebel against his creator stems from his unwillingness to be subjugated by God and his Son, claiming that angels are "self-begot, self-raised", thereby denying God's authority over them as their creator.

Satan is deeply arrogant, albeit powerful and charismatic. Satan's persuasive powers are evident throughout the book; not only is he cunning and deceptive, but he also is able to rally the angels to continue in the rebellion after their agonising defeat in the Angelic War. He argues that God rules as a tyrant and that all the angels ought to rule as gods.

Satan is comparable in many ways to the tragic heroes of classic Greek literature, but Satan's hubris far surpasses those of previous tragedies. Though at times he plays the narrative role of an anti-hero, he is still commonly understood to be the antagonist of the epic. However, the true nature of his role in the poem has been the subject of much notoriety and scholarly debate. While some scholars, like the critic and writer C. S. Lewis, interpret the poem as a genuine Christian morality tale, other critics, like William Empson, view it as a more ambiguous work, with Milton's complex characterisation of Satan playing a large part in that perceived ambiguity.

Adam is the first human created by God. Though initially alone, Adam demands a mate from God. Considered God's prized creation, Adam, along with his wife, rules over all the creatures of the world and reside in the Garden of Eden. He is more intelligent and curious about external ideas than Eve. He is completely infatuated with Eve, which while pure in and of itself, eventually contributes to his reasons for joining Eve in disobedience to God.

Eve is the second human created by God, taken from one of Adam's ribs and shaped into a female form of Adam. In her innocence, she is the model of a good wife, graceful and submissive to Adam. Though happy, she longs for knowledge and, more specifically, self-knowledge. Her first act in existence is to turn away from Adam and look at and ponder her own reflection. Eve is extremely
beautiful and thoroughly in love with Adam, though may feel suffocated by his constant presence. One day, she convinces Adam that it would be good for them to split up and work different parts of the Garden. In her solitude, she is tempted by Satan to sin against God. Adam shortly follows along with her.

The Son of God is the spirit that will become Jesus Christ, though he is never named explicitly, since he has not yet entered human form. The Son of God shares total union with God, and indeed is understood to be a person of the Godhead, along with the Father and the Spirit. He is the ultimate hero of the epic and infinitely powerful, singlehandedly defeating Satan and his followers when they violently rebel against God and driving them into Hell. The Son of God tells Adam and Eve about God's judgment after their sin. However, he sacrificially volunteers to eventually journey to the World, become a man himself, and redeem the Fall of Man through his own death and resurrection. In the final scene, a vision of Salvation through the Son of God is revealed to Adam by Michael. Still, the name, Jesus of Nazareth, and the details of Jesus' story are not depicted in the poem.[7]