

“The Flowing Gold of Her Loose Tresses Hid”: Tittillating Exegesis in *Paradise Lost*

By Jonah Dietz

Jonah Dietz lived in Germany for 13 years before returning to Texas in 2018 to attend WTAMU. (The thought behind returning to the states after a life in Europe was that to study English-language literature, it would be best to study in the English language.) Dietz graduated in 2021 with a mind stuffed full of great literature, expert opinions on it, and—after his capstone paper—a passionate fascination with John Milton and his magnum opus, ready to begin my life as an author. He now lives paycheck to paycheck working for the City of Amarillo. His greatest ambition has always been to create meaningful literature.

This essay looks at the concept of how one might imbue a poem with holy meaning and Milton’s careful and often counterintuitive execution of it. His use of veils to smooth out the wrinkles of his human retelling of a holy story is an epic and paradoxical device, which, in both intended and accidental ways, reminds us of human limitations, the mysteries of art and the elusive nature of truth.

“**E**ve Undeckt, save with herself
More lovely fair / Then Wood-
Nymph, or the fairest Goddess feign’d
/ Of three that in Mount Ida naked
strove, / Stood to entertain her guest
from Heav’n; no vaile / Shee needed,
Vertue-proof, no thought infirme alterd
her cheek” (4.380-385). This is one of
the many instances in John Milton’s
Paradise Lost, where the first humans,
naked and perfect, are described by
way of a referential veil. Here it is Eve,
who, entertaining a holy guest, finds
no shame in her undecked state. At
the same time, the reader is held at
arm’s length regarding the intimacies

of her appearance. Upon investigation
of other descriptions of Adam and
Eve’s unrobed state and Milton’s many
allusions to metaphysical clothes within
this poem, a fascinating question arises.
On its own, it may sound distressingly
licentious, but when fully explored I
believe it gives us insight into not only
how Milton viewed language, but how
humanity deciphers it. The question is:
Why doesn’t Milton describe the holy
couple’s genitals?

Though a common misconception
exists regarding the language and
poetry of centuries past, evidence that
it was as lewd and sexually oriented as

today abounds. A significant portion of
the literature contains carnal puns, rude
allusions and many times, divulging
and explicit images of genitalia and
the various acts these can perform. For
example, Vicar Robert Herrick, author
of the much-loved carpe diem poem “To
the Virgins to Make Much of Time,” had
many verses that spoke about his lover’s
bodily beauty. In a poem entitled “Upon
Julia’s Breasts”, he tells her to “Display
thy breasts, my Julia, there let me /
Behold that circummortal purity” (1,2),
before describing how he will nestle
his lips between them. “Upon Julia’s
Nipples” was another possible example.

Stories of the 17th century and
the centuries that preceded *Paradise
Lost* were full of naked women,
exposed bodies, and sex. Even within
the community of the pious, the
talk of genitalia was not taboo. Saint
Augustine of Hippo in his theological
book *The City of God*, speaks on the
intricacies of Adam and Eve’s genitalia,
going into detail when theorizing on
the prelapsarian hymen and phallus.
Not to mention the various paintings
of the very naked Adam and Eve lining
the walls and ceilings of churches and
cathedrals. Milton’s moderation, then,
when describing his naked characters,
though not surprising considering his
background, bears significance. Milton
appears to shy away from many an
opportunity to go down Eve’s body in
a blazon-like fashion or masterfully

craft a complex verse about Adam’s
exploration of it during their ambigu-
ously worded bower sessions. Two of
the major players in Milton’s long and
incredibly dense poem *Paradise Lost*
are nude for most of their time before
the reader but are never truly exposed.
Milton chooses his words carefully
and although Eve is naked, she is never
intricately displayed and although the
language of the poem implies sex, the
act is never described.

It is this careful and concealing
language that Milton employs, or
in some cases the language he does
not employ, that I wish to call veiled
language or language that veils.
Whether it be by inserting words that
are akin to the convenient foliage
covering the couple in paintings,
excluding expressions that circumvent
the reader’s visual exploration, or an
intricate use of a temporal modifier,
Milton makes sure to veil his holy
couple in a way that invites careful and
intentional uncovering so that the truth
behind his words can be exegeted like
the veils in biblical texts.

Paradise Lost is full of veils. And
Milton uses them in his quest to bring
a perfect paradise tethered to God to
a reader far removed from this haven
of purity and conceal the mysteries of
the divine human pair and their rela-
tionship to their environment for the
reader to uncover. Milton wishes to
add to the story of Adam and Eve, but

in doing so must find a way for them to remain virtuous in the eyes of the virtue-less. To keep the impossible perfection of both the divine and the sexual as it was, Milton places it behind a cover of unknowability he cannot put into words but must to correctly contextualize the perfect couple's fall.

By using literary traditions like innuendo, the blazon, and literary figures of old, he deftly implies the sexual. By using biblical traditions like the veil and marriage, he implies the divine. And by mixing both traditions into his theatrical prose, Milton has Adam and Eve perform for a fallen audience that cannot help but see them as naked within a fallen context but fail to see them entirely as shamefully exposed due to the veils Milton employs.

Veils have a seemingly endless tradition in literature, particularly biblical literature. In the Old Testament, God has his people construct a temple to house his presence and orders a veil to be drawn between him and even the most devout of priests. In the New Testament, Paul describes the mystery of the Gospel as being veiled to those who do not seek understanding. Origen of Alexandria, the highly influential theologian, in his hermeneutic theory says that the truth of scripture "remained covered by a veil until the coming of Christ," and goes on to detail how revelation of truth relies

completely on the unveiling of it. For Origen, biblical language was a veil that covered divine truth. As Susanna Drake puts it when describing Origen's view of language, "the spiritual meaning of scripture is like a treasure hidden in a field of worldly words" (816).

There is little doubt that Milton felt similarly and sought to use his proficiency with words to craft a piece worthy of exegesis; a field of poetry that houses treasure of understanding. Beyond the theological, veils as objects shrouding truth are commonplace, and as Theodore Ziolkowski puts it in "Veils as Metaphor and as Myth," have become a cliché in almost all modern languages. He later simplifies veils as things that cover the sexual and the divine and muses that "the idea seems to be that any direct confrontation with that which is hidden would blind or otherwise distract us" (70). This is in line with Drake's study of Origen and her historical summary of female veils, with which "a woman expressed her honor and bodily self-mastery by ensuring that she was properly concealed and demure in public" (824). When worn, veils guard women against invasion and protect society around them from their bodies and the temptations these arouse.

Pulling again from Herrick, we see this image of a veil covering the sexual in ways that may even elevate it in his work "Upon Julia's Clothes":

Whenas in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then (methinks) how sweetly
flows

That liquefaction of her clothes.
Next, when I cast mine eyes, and see
That brave vibration each way free,
O how that glittering taketh me!

There is enough evidence of the male gaze permeating this poetic society to conclude that Milton, a man himself of this time, would know of the traditions and learned behavior of men, which he may have thought to be completely natural if still sinful, and have the desire to steer clear of a depiction of Eve that would exist solely for sexual gratification. Milton's motivation was not one that could be compared to Herrick drooling in verse over Julia's nipples. He wished to expand upon and clarify what he regarded as the historical story of the Earth's creation, Satan's fall, Adam and Eve's temptation, and the salvation of man. If he was to succeed in presenting perfect truth to a sinful audience, he must veil Eve and her interactions with her husband and angels with a linguistic composition that either distracts the reader, detracts from their supposed pure intent, or titillates a desire to exegete in order to uncover Milton's layered understanding of biblical and metaphysical truth.

One of the more obvious examples of veiled language in *Paradise Lost*, this time being language specifically avoided by Milton, is the absence

of direct and explicit nouns such as tail, sheath, or even rear, to name a few. Milton does not let the reader glide across Adam or Eve's body to gorge their eyes in touristic fashion on the holy parts of the couple. Eve in particular must be protected by this veil as she, like a pious nun, must remain a source of no temptation by way of the exposed corpus. Milton is aware of even the most pure-hearted reader's sin and even when he allows the viewer an image of divine caress between the couple, in which Eve's breast is a focal point, and the word is used for the one and only time, he makes sure to veil her body physically:

[Eve] half imbracing leand
On our first Father, half her
swelling Breast
Naked met his under the flowing
Gold
Of her loose tresses hid.
(4. 492-504)

Eve's hair acts as her purity-preserving veil, shielding her body and the temptations that it holds from the reader while also remaining naked and perfect in her majestic completeness. But this is not a veiling that arises out of prudish bashfulness on Milton's part. The hair here, in its looseness and wild abandon, both harkens back to the kind of looseness and chaos that sexually arouses Herrick, while also negating that intent and even calling to the mind of the reader the fact that, in this garden, there is no danger

of sexual arousal or violence. The hair is a literal veil, covering her breast, and a figurative one, separating us from the couple through sin. When we are first introduced to the holy couple, Milton foregoes a detailed tour of their exposed bodies and instead reminds the viewer that their exposure is in itself nothing shocking or arousing:

With native Honour clad
In naked Majestie seem'd Lords
of all, (...)
"Simplicite and spotless
innocence.
So passd they naked on, nor
shund the sight
Of God or Angel, for they thought
no ill.

(4.289-291, 318-320)

Here is another often used and important veiled linguistic tool that Milton uses. He clothes his couple in metaphorical clothes. Here they are clad in honor and innocence. When the angel Raphael visits the pair, Milton describes Eve as standing naked but that "no vaile / Shee needed, Vertue-proof, no thought infirme / Alterd her cheek. On whom the Angel haile" (Book 5—383-385). When the sublime and perfect nudity of the couple can no longer prove enough to show how tranquilly and perfectly Adam and Eve sit within the hierarchy of their world, as it contends too much with the sinful thoughts and evil intents plaguing the reader's mind, Milton must veil Eve

with the actual word "veil." He must acknowledge that the thing worn to protect a woman and the viewer of her person is not physically needed and therefore inherently present in her nakedness.

In another instance of clothing his pair with words, Milton describes Adam's walk to meet the angel in the following paragraph:

[Adam] walks forth, without
more train
Accompani'd then with his own
compleat
Perfections, in himself was all his
state,
More solemn then the tedious
pomp that waits
On Princes, when thir rich
Retinue long
Of Horses led, and Grooms
besmeard with Gold
Dazles the croud, and sets them
all agape.

(5.352-358)

Nudity, marred by sin and shame, cannot carry the majesty that it did for Adam and so Milton must use royal attire from the reader's expectations of majesty to clothe his Adam so that when a nude man walks to meet a holy angel the reader does not see a lack of covering and an exposed member but a royal procession and divine authority. The reader is not set agape by the wrong things here, but instead in awe

of a confidence and propriety no longer existing.

The human state is perfect in the garden. It contains a level of selfness and belonging that could not be replicated in the reader's mind. Especially, when Eve is involved, and when Eve is in a situation where she interacts with her lover or someone outside of their marriage. So, Milton veils these interactions with more language. While attending to her husband and their angel visitor's needs, Eve is, to a fallen reader, in an awkward position of imbalanced power. Raphael is taking the form of a man and looks on the naked Eve, who has frequently been said to be beautiful. Later in another interaction with Raphael, Eve's departure is stamped with a reminder that her grace is "grace that won who saw to wish her stay" (Book 7, 680). And even within this paragraph describing Eve's wifely ministry, Milton acknowledges that the angel would not, in a sinful sense, be entirely at fault in finding Eve desirable. But at the same time, he covers the scene with a nostalgic disclaimer:

O innocence
Deserving Paradise! if ever, then,
Then had the Sons of God excuse
to have bin
Enamour'd at that sight; but in
those hearts
Love unlibidinous reign'd, nor
jealousie
Was understood, the injur'd

Lovers Hell.

(5.444-450)

Milton acknowledges the libido of the reader while also reminding them that it does not factor into this scene. In her essay, Karma DeGruy says "the repetition of 'then' emphasizes this singular moment and suspends it for an extra syllabic beat before the imaginative faculty of the reader, focused with the narrator on the naked body of Eve" (137). This "veil," then, comes in the form of an inextricable link to an unobtainable past—a reminder that this perfect scene of unlibidinous interaction of naked beings cannot be found precisely because the reader must be reminded that it is unlibidinous. Milton, DeGruy continues, gives us "a wrenching reminder of the distance in the cosmos that can no longer be overcome through proper attunement of the sensitive faculty. The chain of being has expanded to include the perspective of fallen desire" (135). Instead of describing how Eve's breasts lightly bounce before the eyes of her angel guest like a court poet might, Milton yearns for her naked innocence. And so too must the reader.

Milton employs another similar linguistic veil when he gets as close as he ever does to mentioning the lower genitalia of his couple. He calls them "mysterious parts," and, before too many images may be conjured by the reader, plunges into a monologue cata-

logging the shameful voided innocence of the present:

Nor those mysterious parts were
then conceald,
Then was not guiltie shame,
dishonest shame
Of natures works, honor
dishonorable,
Sin-bred, how have ye troubl'd all
mankind
With shews instead, meer shews
of seeming pure,
And banisht from mans life his
happiest life,
Simplicitie and spotless
innocence.

(4.312-318)

New and fallen concepts, such as guilt, shame, and dishonor cloud the couple's unconcealed mysterious parts. If readers be tempted to imagine the intricacies of these parts, then they are straightaway forced to reckon with their sinfulness and how this fallen state keeps them from the world where Adam and Eve need not cover their mystery. And here "mysterious" takes more meaning when veiled by the lack of description and a stirred-up cloud of modern modifiers of a sinful humanity—a humanity that has taken the spotlessly innocent bodies and acts of the garden's inhabitants and turned them to shows of false purity and pride, mere masquerades.

Indeed, in the first of the two marital intercourse sessions that Milton

describes between the pair, he explains that they are "eas'd the putting off / These troublesom disguises which wee wear" (4.738, 739). Here, their nudity acts beyond a mere royal robe that grants them status, as they need no signifiers at all. Eve need not wear a veil to protect society from her body, as society is lustless, and she need not wear a monarchal dress to purport false importance, as she stands undisguisedly regal and perfectly placed within her environment. Taking this further, more biblical imagery may be inferred if one acknowledges the lack of disguises coming from a rightful standing with God. The veil of the temple comes back to the mind of the reader, who must dress according to their status in a sinful world and cannot interact directly with their God, needing a veil to be seen cleansed by their judging King.

Milton has immense respect for Adam and Eve's bodies and the acts they commit but also is making a larger point about prelapsarian identity and existence—one that is so far removed from the existence of the readers—a paradoxical combination of unveiled and veiled existence and an identity that is completely secure. When it comes to the precise ways Adam and Eve use these undescribed and unmentioned parts of their bodies within their secure and perfect marriage, Milton is still vague and theatrically playful in his ambiguity. In his essay, Kent

Lehnhof goes so far as to advocate for a non-penetrative reading of their marital affairs, described in book 4 with this paragraph:

Strait side by side were laid, nor
turn'd I weene
Adam from his fair Spouse, nor
Eve the
Rites Mysterious of connubial
Love refus'd.

(4.738-743)

Lehnhof points to the words "I weene," which is defined as "I assume" to argue that sex as we understand it was not what Adam and Eve partook in before their fall. Regardless of whether this is true, the words do successfully veil the act enough to where both arguments can be made. Milton is careful to never state the concrete. But after this mostly undisputed account of sex, the couple sleeps and it is said "on thir naked limbs the flourie roof / showrd Roses" (4.772-773). These flowers could be, through their showering, a symbol of deflowering or, through their intact state, a sign that Eve is still virginal further a sense of vague unknowability regarding the specifics of Adam and Eve's sexuality. The sex act is in Book 4 but in Book 9 Eve is still referred to as a virgin. But as Lehnhof points out, "Milton's virginal images might mean to emphasize not the absence of prelapsarian sexuality but rather its purity" (71). Certainly, the descriptor is helpful in keeping Eve's purity and

dignity intact for the reader. And, as Eve has yet to fall, these instances of virginity may be in reference to the fact that Eve still wears her veil of innocence, as the removal of veils was typically associated with the loss of virginity. Like the virgin Mary is still virginal after pregnancy, so Eve is virginal after sex.

Lehnhof also tries to use the aforementioned scene where Eve leans against Adam to argue that Milton denies any sexual behavior as we know it. The scene follows Eve's hair-veiled breast pressed against Adam's chest—a scene charged, for fallen readers, with sexual tension:

[Adam] in delight
Both of her Beauty and submissive
Charms
Smil'd with superior Love, as Jupiter
On Juno smiles, when he impregns
the Clouds
That shed may flowers; and press'd
her matron lip
With kisses pure.
(4.492-502)

"References to fatherhood, nakedness, swelling breasts, and impregnation direct the reader to carnal conclusions," Lehnhof says of this excerpt. "But the reader who attends to the classical allusion is arrested in this eroticized understanding of Adam and Eve's behavior" (73). For Juno and Jove, sexuality is built on lies and deceit. This stark contrast between the sinful passions of the mythic gods and the

perfect harmony enjoyed by Adam and Eve forces a comparison by the attentive reader; an exegesis built on a study that affords comparison and contrast to arrive at a state of understanding. Adam and Eve's sexuality is not like that of the fallen literature you have read before.

Examining this scene further, one finds another instance of Milton's veiled language. Milton decidedly cuts off the eroticism of the scene. As Lehnhof describes it, "the passage's steamy eroticism ends rather abruptly with the decidedly unsexy term 'Matron' and the tame task of pressing 'kisses pure'" (73). In Lehnhof's mind, this is to disavow any genital involvement in their romance. But whether it does so or not, it manages to, once again, keep the specifics of their romance veiled by ambiguity while also introducing a new linguistic veil in Milton's arsenal of shrouding implements, namely that of situating the reader and their sinfulness beside that of Satan, whose eyes we use when seeing the couple for the very first time.

The reader is a voyeur. It is one of the main reasons for Milton's veils, why he needs to cover the body of his heroine. And because he is always aware of the reader as a voyeur or the audience at a play, he deftly stages the interactions between Adam and Eve to cover the explicit actions, preserve mystery, and contextualize them as mysteries worthy of exegesis. In this instance, as Lehnhof

puts it, Milton's letting us voyeuristically imagine a sexual component to Adam and Eve's marriage:

The simile's jarring conclusion forces us to acknowledge the lustful and fallen nature of our interpellations into Eden. In fact, the self-conscious discomfort that we feel when we are frustrated in our erotic pleasure reminds us that we are at this point occupying the exact same subjective position as Satan, who is also watching Adam and Eve's conjugal converse and envying their short pleasures. (73)

Aside the Devil turnd

For envie, yet with jealous leer
maligne

Ey'd them askance, and to himself
thus plaind.

(4.502-504)

At this moment, the reader is viewing this interaction, as Stephen Dobranski references in his essay, "over Satan's shoulder" (342). By contextualizing the actions performed by the couple along with the way in which the reader perceives it as sexual, with Satan's voyeurism, Milton manages to hold the lust perceived by the reader at bay. Satan, in a moment of perhaps the purest depiction of Eve's nudity, turns away in jealousy, bringing us back to a place of sin and lust. The framing of Satan in the garden is a way to mirror how fallen humanity interacts with the ideas of sex and nudity, and how even Christians must see all natively human

interaction with the eyes of the devil in mind. Where one is tempted to craft one's own blazon of the scene, Satan manages to bring the veil before our fallen eyes back into view.

And it is through this veil of Satan's perspective with which we first see Milton's numerous literary and poetic traditions that taint our view of Eve arise. So much of the way Milton frames his couple with words is intended to evoke the sin in the reader to remind them that it does not apply in the garden. Eve's veil of hair is frequently described as a chaotic golden tress of wantonness and discomposed curls—something the poetry of the time used as a symbol of adultery and sexual promiscuity:

Shee as a vail down to the slender
waste

Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Disshemeld, but in wanton ringlets
wav'd.

(4.304-306)

But in Eden, these traits are the natural state of perfect humanity and have no place in the sexualized world of carnal poetry. "Milton deliberately draws upon the concupiscent meanings of "wanton" to emphasize the complete absence of carnality in Eve's prelapsarian appearance," Lehnhof posits. "Milton repeats the same pattern of suggesting sinfulness in order to refute sinfulness" (72).

Milton does this, in part, because of the aforementioned cultural view of

the female body. To present a virtuous woman that is also nude and arguably sexually active before the audience, Milton always refers the reader back to the sinful way women were viewed and remind them that these views are not applicable here. In her essay, Moira Baker analyses Fulke Greville's poem "Caelica," specifically the portion where he compares his spurning lover's genitals both to the garden of Eden and the reason for his expulsion from it. Baker explains:

The woman's body, specifically her genitals, caus[ing] an exile from happiness suggests she is the conduit of sin and death. Woman's sexuality is inscribed in an impossible, self-contradictory position: it is at once the earthly garden of sexual delights and the forbidden pleasure that, once tasted, exiles man from heavenly bliss. (13)

But Eve cannot be viewed this way. Not only is Milton trying to protect the holy mother of humanity from the vile darts of voyeuristic eyes, but he is trying to establish an adequately perfect image of a perfect living human so that her fall is all the more impactful. A common, sexualized, and sexually exploited female body is not what Eve is meant to be—she is half of a pair that perfectly encapsulates the divine intents for which humanity was created and the mysterious and unknowable perfection that no one could imagine possessing.

And when both have fallen to sin and shame, Milton brings his use of symbolic veils to its natural and inevitable conclusion, as the couple awakens and finds their innocence stripped from their bodies and their standing in the environment shaky and uncertain:

Soon found thir Eyes how op'nd,
and thir minds

How dark'nd; innocence, that as a
veile

Had shadow'd them from knowing
ill, was gon,

Just confidence, and native
righteousness,

And honour from about them,
naked left To guiltie shame hee
cover'd, but his Robe

Uncover'd more.

(8.1053-1059)

Both crudely crafted clothes of leaves and twigs, clothes that are labelled, like Satan's shapeshifting disguises, vain coverings, and, naturally, this shameful concealment of their once sublimely unshrouded bodies is the primary giveaway of their sin (that, and their shame itself) that "sought vain covertures" (9.336). But in a much more depressing sense, this acquisition of veils that were not needed before indicates that the fallen state of the reader, that state marked by a fractured relationship with God and a confused and terrified state of identity, has now been reached by the previously pure couple. What was previously so

natural and holy that it was metaphysical—inherent, is now a loincloth made of leaves. One veil has been torn off and replaced by a new one; one that separates instead of sewing together. Like a text meant to be exegeted and uncovered, their bodies are exposed and with this the state of the reader themselves. Where before it was said that in themselves was all their state, this state is now inadequate, embarrassingly so, and presides behind a physical veil of their making that makes an exegesis of their bodies, like that of their souls, lead to distressingly shameful conclusions. Where once they were shadowed by a veil that held guilt and shame at bay, they are now shadowing that guilt and shame, unsuccessfully, with themselves. Throughout all of this, however, the veil of Milton's language has remained unremoved, and the power of Eden's unknowable truth and beauty remains up for exegesis.

Previously I posited that one of Milton's main reasons for veiling the prelapsarian bodies and sexual acts of Adam and Eve in ambiguity is to keep them from the voyeuristic eyes of the reader, but I believe that even more important to Milton is preserving the vagueness and purported perfection the biblical source material contests. While Milton is trying to expound upon that holy history, confident in his intelligence and skill, he is also knowledgeable of his limitations and clearly

reverent of the players in his poem and the state they inhabit. The marital acts they partook in are too wonderful for a reader with a less magnificent experience to understand and Milton wants to do them justice. This constant linguistic veiling lends itself nicely to what Milton most assuredly desired: the careful interpretation of his every word. But within this, Milton also wants his readers to exegete his meaning as well as interpret it. Milton does not wish that all who read *Paradise Lost* simply be able to construe paradisaical sociality in a sinfully sexual manner. Nor does he want us to merely uncover his alluded meanings. He wants us, like good theologians, to imbue the text with meaning. Like John Savoie, who attempts to argue for the presence of fellatio in the post-lapsarian lovemaking of Adam and Eve by diving into the almost identically passionate and sensuous accounts of lovemaking and asserting that the use of the word fallacious coupled with the oral fixation of Milton's language and symbolism infer an act of lovemaking that will not lead to children. Savoie imbues Milton's possible punning upon "fellatio" with a rich interpretation that, in his words helps "clarify the difficult distinction between love and lust, between the ideal of sex as designed by God and its corruption into mere appetite and sensual pleasure" that Milton was aiming for (162). Or Wolfgang Rudat, who reads in Eve's

devouring of the symbolically feminine fruit, an act of sexual self-gratification and in Adam's post-fruit initiation of sex, a loss of the autonomy he once had over his body and a new subjugation to the woman for arousal. Milton, to an exegeting Rudat, is showing us the evils of a disturbed hierarchy, and an in-depth allegory for human interpersonal politics.

Exegesis is not simply interpretation by way of an imparted meaning as well as an uncovered one. Milton wants the reader to dissect his words, find the deeper truths hidden in these allusions and imbue them with more. By diminishing its presence and veiling the actual perfections of the holy couple's bodies and how they use them, the reader can try and uncover the extent of that beauty and perfection, and then can ruminate on what Milton finds the missing component of contemporary marriage. Perhaps Milton knew that, where his limitations ended, the boundless possibility of exegeted meaning begins. And when we try and make sense of linguistic veils, we place higher truths than we can comprehend behind them.

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